

**1st  
ISSUE!**

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# Crikey!

**The Great British Comics Magazine!**



# Ken Reid



Interviewed by David Britton

*This interview took place in the artist's home in Pendlebury, Manchester – the home of Fudge and a host of other characters – in the summer of 1979, eight years before his death in March 1987. His mother, Mrs Reid, was present.*

Ken Reid enjoyed a career as a children's illustrator for more than forty years.

The variety of comic book characters he created for Fleetway, IPC and DC Thomson have had as much effect on successive generations as the *Goons* in the '50s, and *Monty Python* in the '60s.

His most unique creation, the serialised strip adventures of *Fudge the Elf* was begun, 'with artistic promise', in 1937, in the *Manchester Evening News*, but did not reach maturity until Ken Reid's return from the Army in 1945.

Unfortunately, the strip was not syndicated and its readership remained largely in the North West of England.

In *Fudge*, Ken Reid created that unique kind of fantasy dream world that appeals both to adults and children, common to classics like Carroll's *Alice*, Barrie's *Peter Pan* or Tolkien's *Rings*.

In the comic strip format it is only matched in its consistent excellence and strangeness by Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo*.

**David Britton:** How did you first conceive the idea of *Fudge*?

**Ken Reid:** I originally thought of a strip with a budgerigar called "Budge"—"The Adventures of Budge"—but I just could not get the drawings right, so I thought I would introduce an elf with him, a form of semi-human character. I then had to think of a name for the elf that rhymed with "Budge". I went all through the alphabet until I came to "F"—"Fudge"—which sounded right. It was also the name of a toffee—fudge toffee—and, I found out later, it was also a newspaper term for a stop



Ken's over-the-top visual style made *Franki* in *Wham!* an instant hit.

press item: "Stop the press there's a fudge coming through!"

The drawings of Fudge were very different when I first began his adventures in 1938. He was smaller and rounder, not much bigger than the animals in the strip, and he grew up gradually over the years without me realising it. I started Fudge the Elf in late 1938 when I was seventeen, and he had not run for twelve months in the Manchester Evening News, my local paper, when war broke out.

**DB:** This seems an appropriate moment to ask you how you managed to interest the News in the Fudge strip?

**Mrs Reid:** When Ken was sixteen and seventeen years of age he used to go round the Manchester art studios with his folio of drawings trying to interest people sufficiently to obtain commissions. But work was very hard to come by in those days and Ken was getting despondent. It was always the same tale that he received, "We will let you know", but nothing ever came of it.

It was Ken's father who suggested that he try the



**Fudge - the little elf who started it all.**

News. But Ken was very dubious about doing this. The two of them did eventually go to the News building, which was then in Cross Street. They were stopped at the entrance by the commissionaire who asked if they had an appointment, to which Ken's father quickly replied that they had an appointment to see the Art Editor - who turned out to be a Mr Barton.

Well, Mr Barton was very good. He looked through

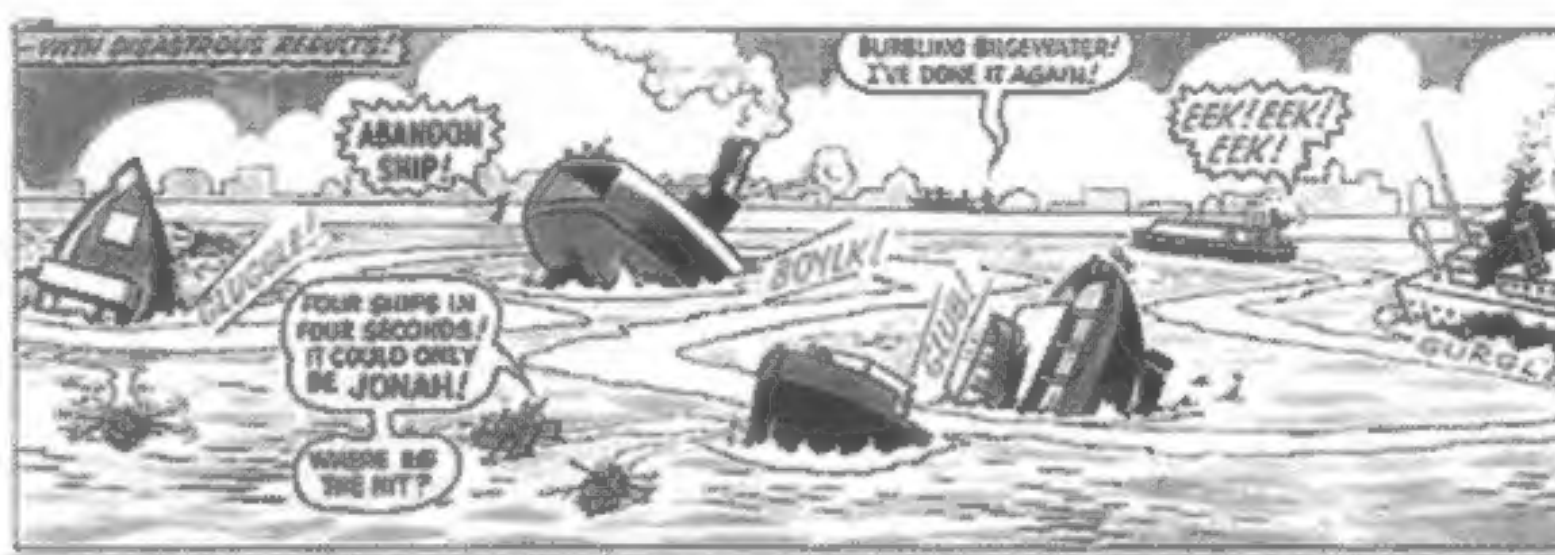


Ken's folio and was impressed. By a coincidence, he said, the News had been looking for an artist to do a children's strip. He told Ken that if he would like to submit a sample drawing his work would be considered, although he warned Ken that he could expect some very stiff competition from other artists. The strip had to have a story line, and up until that time Ken had only done artwork. He sent them the example he had promised and thought that that would be the end of it. There was nobody more surprised than him when he got word that the job was his if he wanted it!

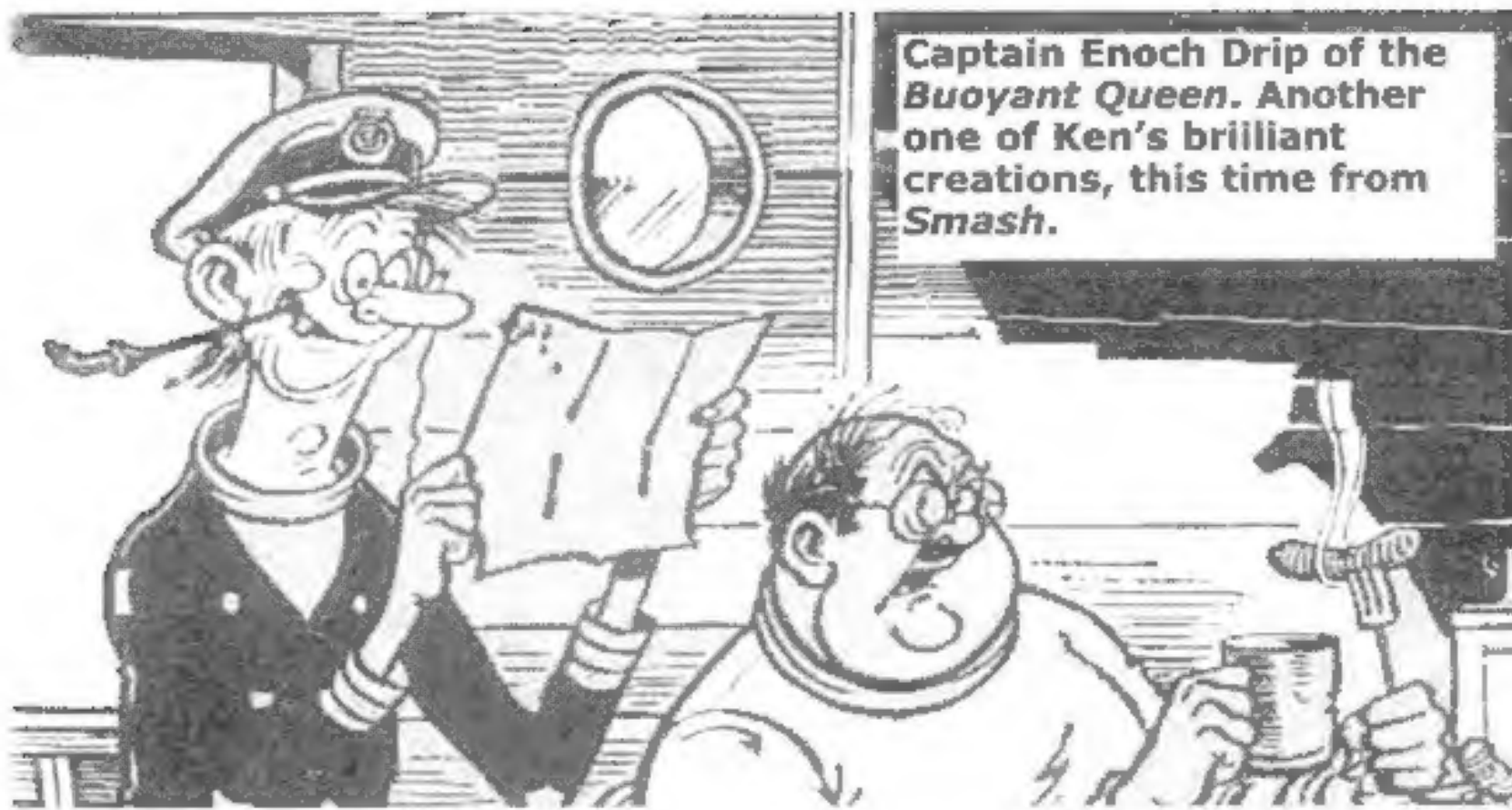
**KR:** I remember before I started work on Fudge I took a small, rented room behind a shop in Water Street in central Manchester. The rent was 7/6d a week, and I converted the room into a studio. I used to travel to this one room every day on my bicycle from Irlam-o'th-Height where I lived at that time. (About a 40-minute ride - ed.)

It was a handy place to try and build up a business

in. There was a photographer's on the floor above and when they needed artwork with life in it they used to send it down for me to draw. When I started Fudge I no longer needed the office; I could do the work more easily from home. The whole building on Water Street was blown up during the war.



Jonah made his first appearance in *Beano* 817 (15 March 1958). He brought bad luck to everyone - except Ken, that is!



**Captain Enoch Drip of the Buoyant Queen. Another one of Ken's brilliant creations, this time from Smash.**

**DB:** Did you have a formal art education?

**KR:** I was granted a free scholarship to Salford Art School when I was thirteen. I suspect that if I had gone in for the full scholarship, with all the different subjects, I would have failed hopelessly, so I just did the art part and they passed me on that. Later, after the war, I attended Manchester Art College in the evenings.

**Mrs Reid:** Ken was always drawing, even as a very small boy. In fact Ken had a very serious illness when he was nine. We had returned from a holiday and Ken had



been in the sea, which was very cold, and he became very, very ill. He complained of pains in the back and side. We called the doctor to him, who in turn called a specialist, and they both diagnosed that he had a tubercular hip, and that he would never walk again. They assured me that I would have to wheel Ken around in a spinal carriage for the rest of his life.

He was confined to bed for six months, after which his father consulted another doctor, a Doctor Glen of Eccles. Dr Glen worked very hard on



Ken, who managed a very good recovery, but it took a very long time. All through his illness Ken continued drawing. His drawing pad was never far from his bed. Ken's father always gave him great encouragement, and was very pleased

that Fudge was proving to be such a hit with readers of the News. (Ken Reid's father acted as his agent until his death in 1953 - DB.)

**DB:** How did the character of Speck come about? The Fudge stories in the newspaper always feature Speck very prominently and at times it seems that he is the dominant character.

**KR:** Speck was the adventurous one. Speck usually got them both in a mess. Speck was not in the strip when it first started. The strip had been running for about six weeks as a series, three-picture stories each night. The News then asked me if I could convert it into a serial, to encourage readers to buy the paper on consecutive nights to find out what would happen next to Fudge. It was then that I introduced Speck, so that Fudge would have someone to talk to.

Most of the plots that went into the storyline have their basis in everyday things. I think that you have a photograph of me looking at a tank of tropical fish (in the frontis-photo of Savoy's edition of *Fudge in Bubbleville* - DB), from which came the idea of an underwater adventure for Fudge.

**DB:** Speck featured prominently in the first strip that you did after the war. I always felt *Speck's Inventions* contained some of your finest artwork, and it was a great pity you didn't do this one as a book as you did with *Fudge in Bubbleville* and the others. Any particular reason why not?

**KR:** *Speck's Inventions* was probably the longest Fudge story that I did. It ran for almost twelve months in the News, and it would have been impractical to reduce it down to the same size as the annuals that London University Press did. All the Fudge annuals had to be edited down from their original published length in the newspapers.

**DB:** In what order were the original Fudge books released?



**KR:** The first book, *The Adventures of Fudge*, was done only as a book, written especially for the publisher, and not as a reprint from the News. It differed from the other books because it was largely text, with illustrations laid-out amongst the print.

The second book, *Frolics with Fudge* which was first published in the News, set the format for the rest of the books. *Fudge's Trip to the Moon* was the third, also first published by the News. (As were all the later titles - DB)

I remember I had to redraw certain illustrations for this book, for quite a few of the original frames had been lost. I drew the replacements while still in the Army, stationed at Bristol. I had to stop behind at night and work on the book while the rest of the men went out after duties. This is why some readers may detect a difference in style around the middle of the book.



**DB:** Which Fudge stories do you personally enjoy most?

**KR:** *Fudge and the Dragon* I particularly like, and I enjoyed doing *Fudge and the Old Well*, which only appeared as a newspaper strip.

**DB:** I recall you once told me that *Fudge and the Flame Fairies* contained some of your finest artwork, and that the original artwork for the whole story disappeared under mysterious circumstances that we shall not go into here.

**KR:** Yes. The editor of the News, Thomas Henry, also

**DB:** Did you find that ideas came easier to you when you were working on the Fudge strips?

**KR:** It was easier then than it is now to come by ideas. Fudge was easier because once I got the general theme for the story, the skeleton of the plot, then I just added to it as I went along. Also, I did not have such a strict deadline. I had plenty of time to think.

Later, in the 1950s, when I started doing strips for D C Thomson, time became more important. I used to work through the day until 1pm, then come downstairs and watch television until midnight. There was no ITV, just the one channel. Then I would start again at twelve and work through until 3 am.



liked that one the best. Anything that was capable of producing flame, or even an electric spark anything that produced fire in any form—went on strike. Absolutely everything went dead – car engines fizzled out because no spark could be generated in the spark plugs, candles could not be made to burn. That was how the story began, and Fudge was given the job of finding out what the unrest was about – and to try to put matters right.

As I remember it was a very long strip, and now the original artwork is lost.

book illustrators of the turn-of-the-century have any influence?

**KR:** I remember Heath Robinson. But one of my earlier influences was Walt Disney, Snow White, etc. If you have noticed the cap that Fudge wears you will have noticed the similarity to Mickey Mouse's face. Fudge also had a Mickey Mouse figure in the very first drawings I did of him.



Ken felt increasingly under pressure with his comic book work.

# TOM HORROR'S WORLD



## MARTHA'S MONSTER MAKE-UP



**DB:** Did the films of Max Fleischer make any impression on you? *Gulliver's Travels*, the Betty Boop cartoons? Mike Moorcock drew parallels between Fleischer's work and some of the characters in *Fudge and the Dragon*.

**KR:** No, I don't think so, although I do remember them. I feel that Disney was the main influence.

**DB:** How did you get involved with the children's comics?

**KR:** I first started doing children's comics as such with *Comic Cuts* in the late 1940s. I remember one called *Super Sam*, and *Foxy* was another. *Super Sam* was on the front page. Both these strips were running when *Comic Cuts* folded.

I then approached Odham's Press who were doing the *Eagle*. I started negotiating with them for a strip I had done in full colour called *Zooville*. I had completed two pages of this, for which I was paid, when D C Thomson's came up with a more definite offer, which I accepted. What I didn't know at the time was that Odham's Press and the *Eagle* paid nearly double what D C Thomson could pay me. Anyway, I went with D C Thomson's and have been doing children's comics ever since. At Thomson's, *Roger the Dodger* was the first strip I worked on. Then *Grandpa*, which is still going, although another artist now does the strip. *Angel Face* was another, which I did for *The Dandy*. *Bing-Bang-Benny*, a little cowboy, also appeared in *The Dandy*. *Ali Ha Ha* and the *Forty Thieves*, *Big Head* and *Thick Head*, followed later.

In 1958 I began *Jonah*, which is the comic strip I am probably best known for. When I went over to Odham's I did the strips *Frankie Stein*, *Jasper the Grasper*, *Queen of the Seas*, and quite a few more.

**DB:** It must have been hectic ...

**KR:** At one stage, in the late fifties, it certainly was. *Fudge the Elf* took three days. Two days on *Jonah*, and



Just a sample of the great facial expressions conjured up by Ken Reid during a lifetime in comics.

What follows is a reasonable attempt at a list of characters and strips worked on by Ken Reid. The list is compiled from Ken's own recollections when interviewed by Dave and later research.

Some strips are not assigned to individual titles. If you can help, drop us a line at the electro-web-thingy.

In cases where characters were transferred or reprinted in another title, we have listed only the original comic (otherwise it can get very confusing).

Ali Ha-Ha and the Forty Thieves (Dandy)  
 Banger and Masher (Scorcher)  
 Big Head and Thick Head (Dandy)  
 Bing-Bang Benny (Dandy)  
 Creepy Creations (competition in Whoopee)  
 Dare A Day Davy (Wham!)  
 Faceache (Jet, Buster)  
 Football Forum (Scorcher)  
 Foxy (Comic Cuts)  
 Frankie Stein (Wham!)  
 George's Germs (Wham!)  
 Grandpa (Beano)  
 Harry Hammertoe (?)  
 Hugh Fowler (Scorcher)  
 Jasper the Grasper (Wham!)  
 Jimmy Jinks (Scorcher)  
 Jinx (Beano)  
 Jonah (Beano)  
 Little Angel Face (Dandy)  
 (The) Nerves (Smash and Pow)  
 Manager Matt (Scorcher)  
 Martha's Monster Make-up (Monster Fun)  
 Prize Picture (competition in Whoopee)  
 Queen of the Seas (Smash)  
 Roger the Dodger (Beano)  
 (The) Soccernauts (Scorcher and Score)  
 (The) Sub (Scorcher)  
 Torn Horror's World (Whoopee)  
 Triptoe Triers (?)  
 Wanted (competition in Whoopee)  
 World Wide Weirdies (competition in Whoopee)

Plus

Horse Clues, Horse Pics, Titles, Inn Signs and numerous others (The Sunday Express).

**The rewards  
 of a comic  
 book artist  
 are many!**



other work for both *The Dandy* and *The Beano* (Big Head & Thick Head; Ali Ha-Ha, and the 40 Thieves – DB) and amongst other work I was doing a competition page for the Irish edition of *The Sunday Express*.

**DB:** Could you tell me why the Fudge strip was discontinued in the News?

**KR:** The strip was finished in 1962. I had been ill, which was reported at the time in the News, and while I recovered they reprinted one of the earlier strips.

But the main reason I gave up the strip was because of an offer I had received from Odhams. The Odham editors had been up from London to see me and had made an extremely good offer to work exclusively for their journals. You see I had been doing children's comic strips for Odham's main rival, D C Thomson, since the early 1950s. I dropped the Fudge strips and gave up the work I was doing for D C Thomson.

When I first began the Fudge strips I was paid 2 guineas a week—that was in 1938/39. After the war I re-started the strip at 5 guineas. It crept up gradually to 18 guineas by the time I finished. Odham's were offering me £30 per page—(twelve pictures)—against D C Thomson's £15 per page. Anybody would have changed over! ■

**Special thanks to Dave Britton for permission to use this interview. Visit Savoy Books website for more on Fudge and other publications from Dave.**



# The Terrible Toys

## of Dr Droll

By Tom Sweetman



If there was ever a good time to be a child it must have been in the Sixties. Every generation can argue that they had the best toys and it's probably rosy nostalgia that solidifies their beliefs that they are right but the toys that marched off the shelves and into the Christmas stockings of sixties Britain were beyond anything seen before.

It was an eclectic time when westerns and war and spaceships all seemed to merge in a riotous swirl of tin, paint and plastic to produce toys that flashed, whistled, moved and, if you were really lucky, spat sparks! The automaton may have delighted our grandparents but it was the walking, squawking battery and friction operated robots and tanks that characterised a sixties childhood. It's an era of heady fascination that, when mixed with childhood fantasies fuelled by television and comics, led to some impressive game-play.

### Stripped for Action

Long before the warring robots of the twenty-first century, came the toys that existed in comics; seemingly etched from graphite, their blackness shining like a cinematic Dalek.

Strips filled with toothsome, gnarled old men who used toys as their means to take over the world. The toys that were the property of childhood had somehow been snatched, mutilated and assimilated as evil parodies of their original intent. Decades before the Borg there were evil forces out there that were looking to seize our technology for their own purposes.

That was not where it all began though. The original toymaster (and possibly the one remembered most fondly) was General Jumbo. He was enviously equipped with an armpad that operated a miniature army by 'remote control' (an amazing concept in the mid-sixties).

General Jumbo used his toys for good while still fulfilling the dreams of lads

**Paddy Brennan's wonderfully weird General Jumbo who in later years switched services to become Admiral Jumbo.**



Using a dizzying range of angles, the terrible toys kept attacking in the pages of *Smash*.

pages of *Smash*. Better known as the Toymaker, Jardine, was the crazed nemesis of Joe and Sandy Douglas who battled against his mechanical monstrosities on a weekly basis.

The dark symbolism of toys advancing in a robotic, unstoppable march was a powerful metaphor for the rising fear of the potential techno-destruction that characterised this period in history – a time when the race to the moon offered hope but the same technology threatened devastation and despair. This dual fascination with the creative wonders offered by science and the potential destructive forces that could be unleashed was played out in the black and white nightmares that characterised stories such as the Toymaker and his evil Doom-bots. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times and to be young may have been heaven but childhood could also be a scary place. The Toys of Doom were the precursor of the nuclear nightmares that ushered in the seventies and eighties.

### Toy Wars

One of the most appealing things about comics in the sixties was that you could finish reading a story and then act it out with your very own toys. So what if you didn't have the rather expensive Thunderbirds range. All that was needed was a clockwork tank and a few plastic soldiers and the Toys of Doom were on the march!

The threat of terror toys was

revisited in *Smash* in 1970 through the inimitable Dr Droll and his army of autobots. Droll looked to all intents and purposes like a clone of his precursor the Toymaker – which was no surprise as that was exactly who he was but with a new alias and the ability to conjure up even scarier visions.

The image of the Teddy Bear, that most homely of childhood pals, turned into a goose-stepping automaton with machine guns protruding from its goo-goo eyes was one of the more memorable machinations that this evil genius fashioned. The army toys that Droll used were the dark side of General Jumbo's harmless army. Here was a true menace and the realisation that childhood innocence could be corrupted just as easily as Droll could shape mindless violence from sugar-coated mice.

### The Toymaker

February 1965 saw the first appearance of Henry Jardine, evil creator of a rogue army of killer toys, in the

### Naming Names

The interchangeable Droll and Jardine adventures were published under several titles. 'Threat of the Toymaker',

# THE HOUSE OF DOLMANN

A master-puppeteer known as Dolmann had created an army of mechanical warriors to fight crime. When a gang of burglars disguised as cats stole a valuable doll which he had been repairing, Dolmann and his puppets tracked the crooks to their hide-out. But there they were caught in a monster mousetrap...



DOLMANN'S HANDS WERE TIED BEHIND HIS BACK...

HEY, BOSS, I RECOGNISE THESE TOY MEN... THEY CAME FROM THE SHOP WHERE WE PINCHED THE LADY-DOLL!



BUT THE DOLL HERSELF IS NO USE TO US... SO WE'RE GOING TO JETTISON HER IN THIS ODD FLYING-MACHINE OF YOURS! GET THE IDEA?

YOU MEAN YOU'RE GOING TO FRAME ME!



MOMENTS LATER, DROLL AND HIS YOUNG PRISONERS CREPT UP TO THE FENCE OF THE R.A.F. STATION!



'The Terror Toys' and 'The Toys of Doom' each featured the same menace with slight changes to script and artwork. What was clear though, is that subsequent generations were being faced with the same monstrosities. The original Toymaker even had a grandson, Nick Jardine who resurrected the Toys of Doom in the 1980s in the revamped *Eagle*. The story took on new levels as the whiz-kid grandson of the sixties super-criminal tried to live up to his relative's lascivious legacy.

So why the fascination with evil toys? Sure there are the psychological reasons hinted at above and the toys may have represented a rite of passage but maybe we are delving too deeply and what was really attractive was the sheer menace of toys gone wrong.

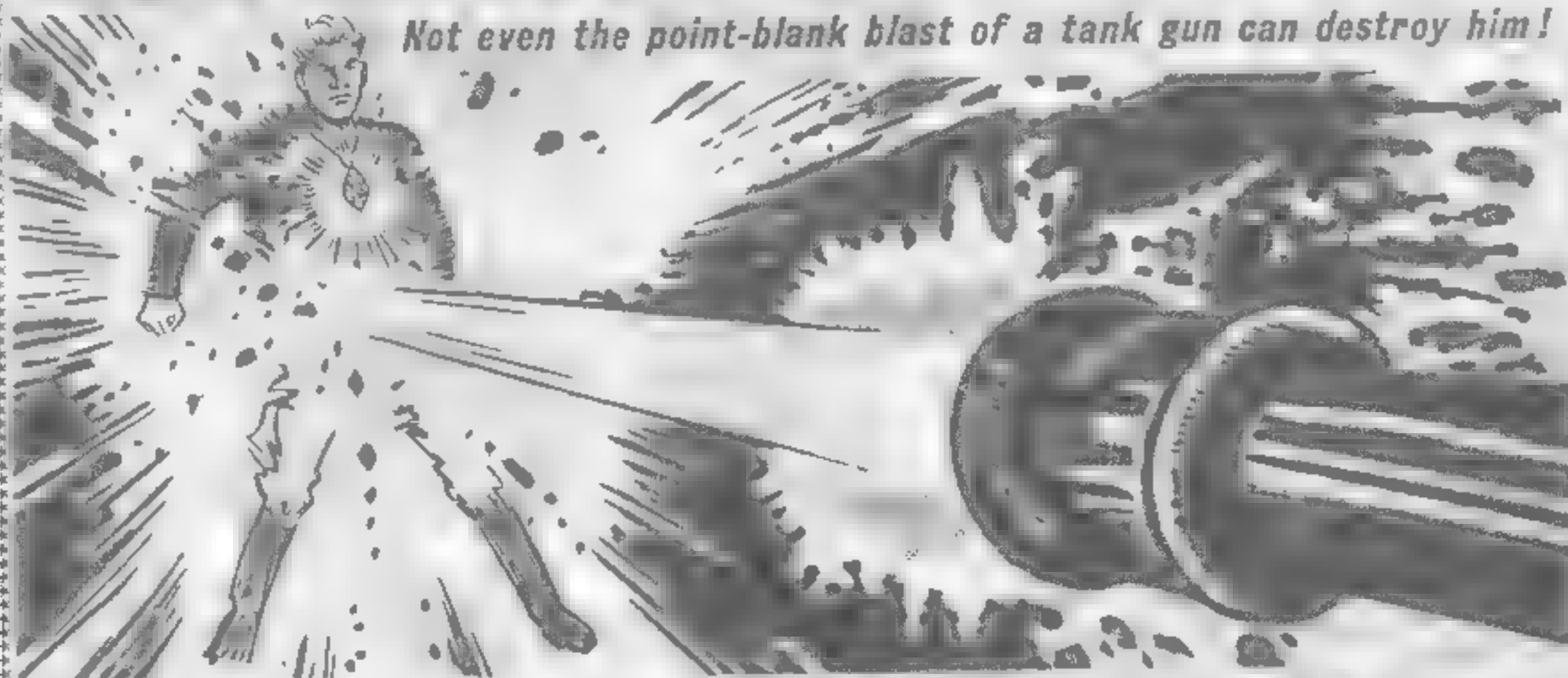
The dark artwork (characteristic of much of *Buster* and *Smash* at the time) helped but above all it was the evil face of Dr Droll and the Terrible Toymaker as they took the trappings of childhood and manufactured proto-suicide bombers. The toys were deadly because toys were symbols of happiness, recreation and innocence. Long before any politically correct debate on the suitability of war toys, we played with our own weapons of mass distraction.

Childhood has to end though and the army of robots that marched towards you with guns blazing and explosives packed in their backpacks ushered in a far more deadly age. ■

The frantic pace and increasingly bizarre stories kept the toy terrors fresh and somehow almost real.

# BLAZING THRILLS WITH THE INVINCIBLE TIM KELLY!

*Not even the point-blank blast of a tank gun can destroy him!*

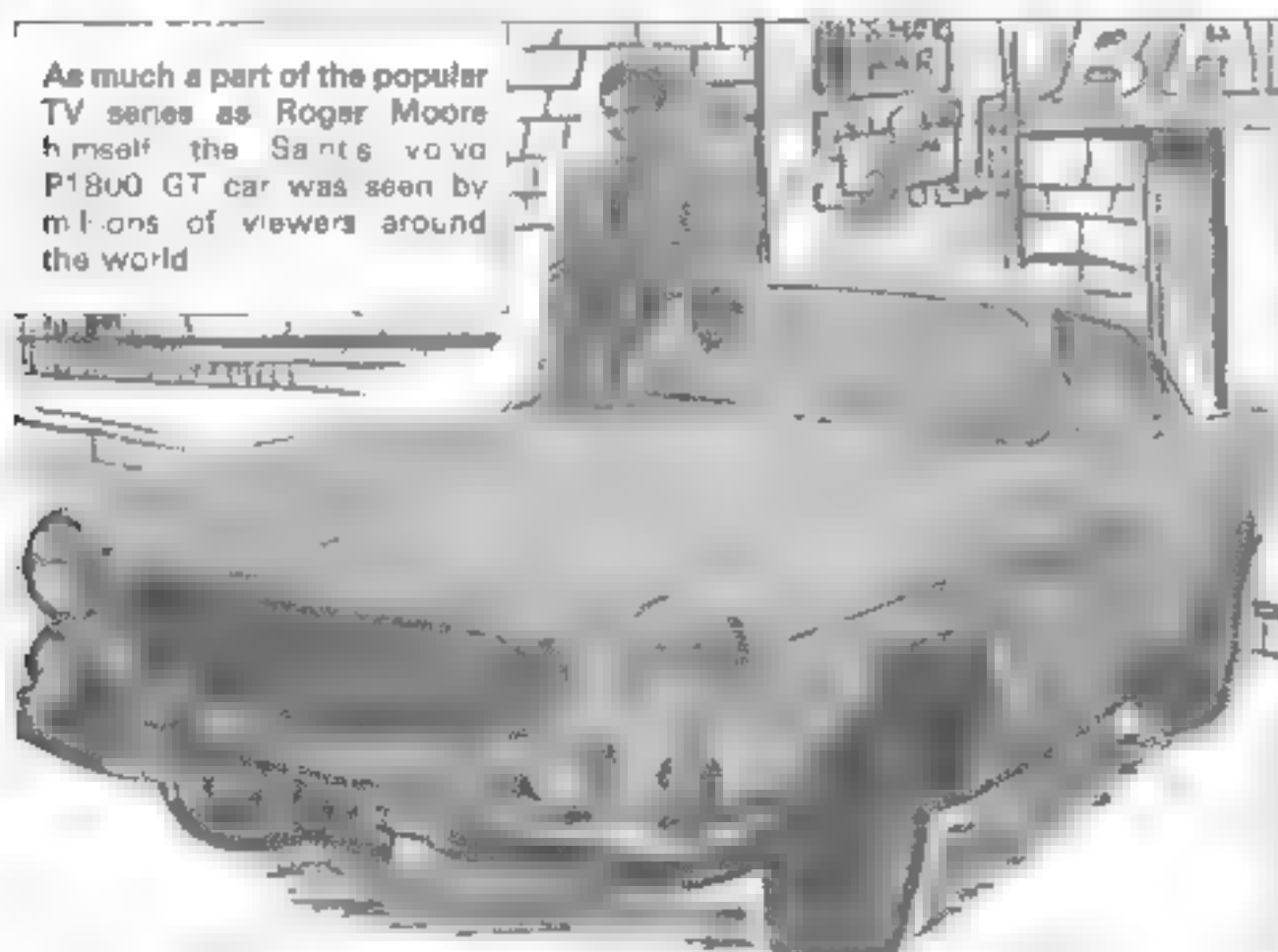


In an ancient Inca temple, Tim Kelly found the amazing Eye of Zoltec which gave him everlasting life . . . and from that day on he devoted himself to the fight against evil and corruption!

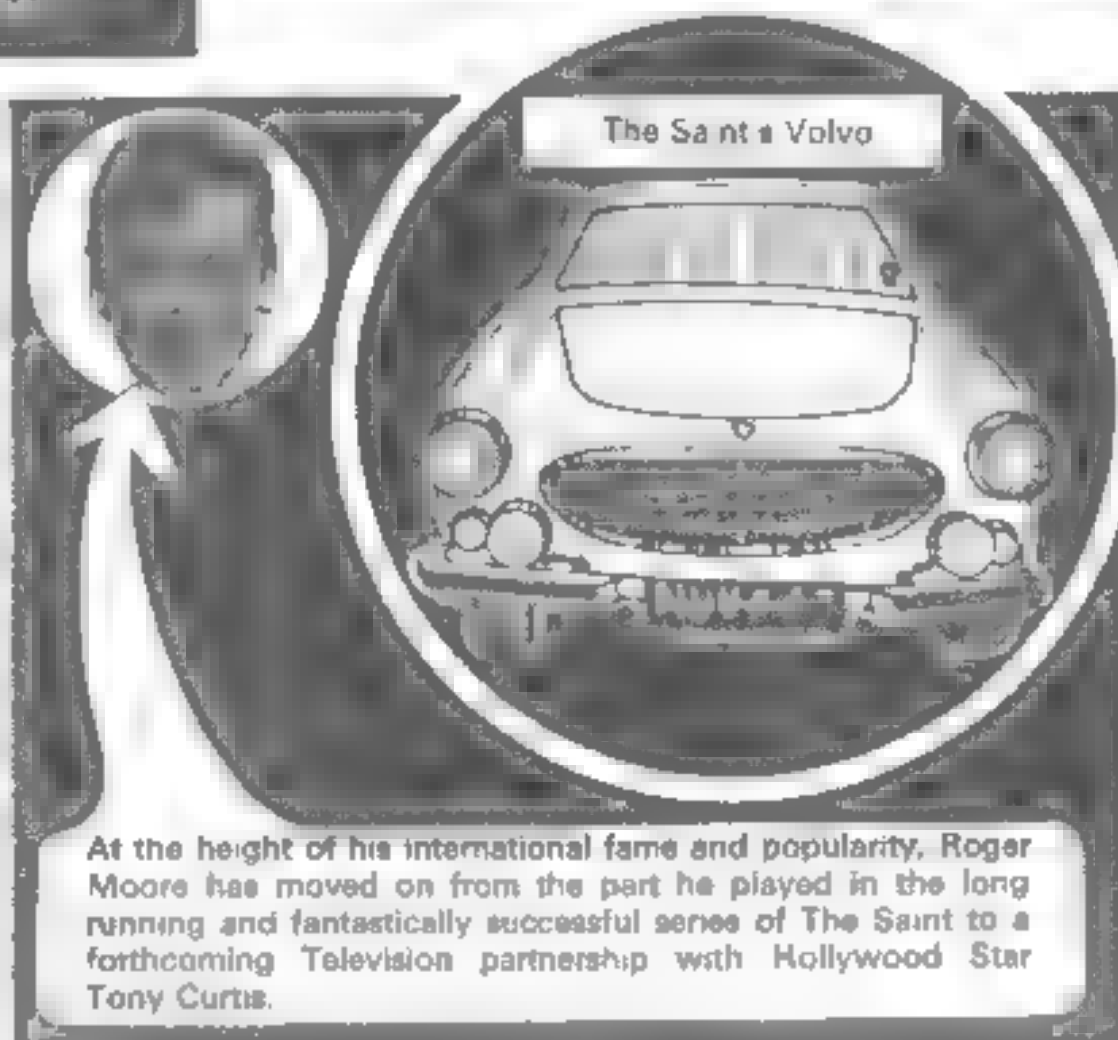
Follow his thrilling exploits every Monday in action-packed pictures in . . .



The ads may have been basic back then but boy, did they get the message across! Of course, the Saints' car was never as good as a certain Aston Martin ...



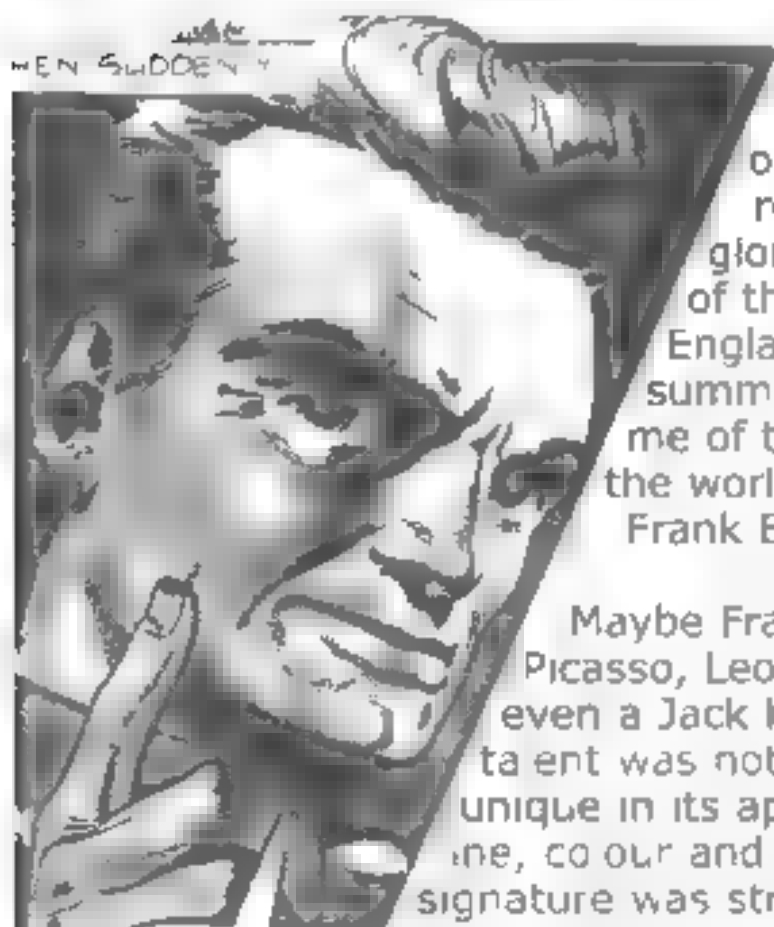
As much a part of the popular TV series as Roger Moore himself, the Saint's Volvo P1800 GT car was seen by millions of viewers around the world.



At the height of his international fame and popularity, Roger Moore has moved on from the part he played in the long running and fantastically successful series of The Saint to a forthcoming Television partnership with Hollywood Star Tony Curtis.

This is the first of what will be another regular slot in Crikey! We each have a personal real-life comic hero, an artist, writer – or if you're really geeky, an editor or letterer – who transformed the way you enjoyed comics. This is the slot for you to let the world know who it was who set you along the road from average comic reader to comic strip nut. We start off with Glenn B Fleming's recollections of the great

# FRANK BELLAMY



While the summer of 1976 is usually remembered for its glorious weather – one of the hottest in England's history – that summer will always remind me of the passing of one of the world's great artists: Frank Bellamy

Maybe Frank wasn't Pablo Picasso, Leonardo da Vinci or even a Jack Kirby, but Frank's talent was nothing if not unique, unique in its approach to layout, line, colour and storytelling. Even his signature was striking. Bellamy, of

Churchill), 'The Shepherd King' (the life of the biblical King David), 'The Travels of Marco Polo', 'Heros the Spartan' and 'Fraser of Africa'.

Then Frank Hampson suddenly left 'Dan Dare' and Bellamy took over the strip. Frank produced 'full' artwork – layout, line, colouring even lettering the strip himself, something of a radical move in the early '50s British comics scene. He also changed the designs of the strip's spacecraft, uniforms and especially the layout of the pages thus causing a stir in the editorial offices at The Eagle.

Bellamy stayed on 'Dan Dare' for only a year and following artists were instructed to revert to previous incarnations of Dan Dare and produce the strip as Hampson had. Despite these artistic differences, Bellamy continued to work for Eagle until 1966, producing 'Montgomery of Alamein' (the life of Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery) and he also produced work for Look and Learn.



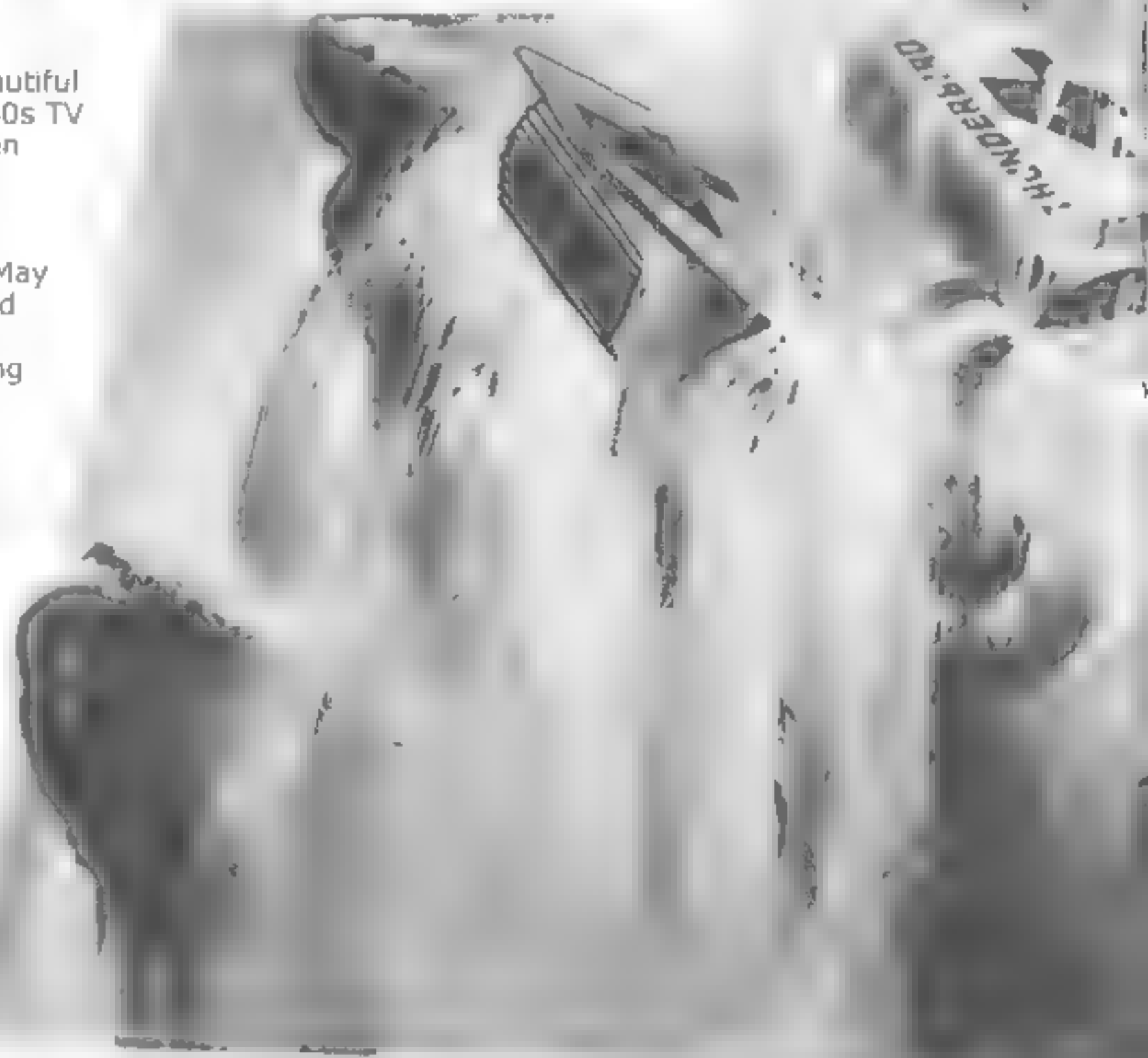
course, will be forever remembered as the quintessential 'Thunderbirds' artist whose beautiful full colour work was seen in the pages of 1960s TV Century 21 – but his story didn't begin or even end with that strip.

## A bit of background

Born in Kettering, Northamptonshire on 21 May 1917, Bellamy had an unremarkable childhood and was later stationed in Bishop Auckland after being drafted into the British army during the Second World War.

It was here Frank met the future Mrs Bellamy with whom he had one son. During his tenure in the army, Bellamy had a weekly illustration published in his hometown's newspaper and following his demob in 1948, he worked in advertising for several years.

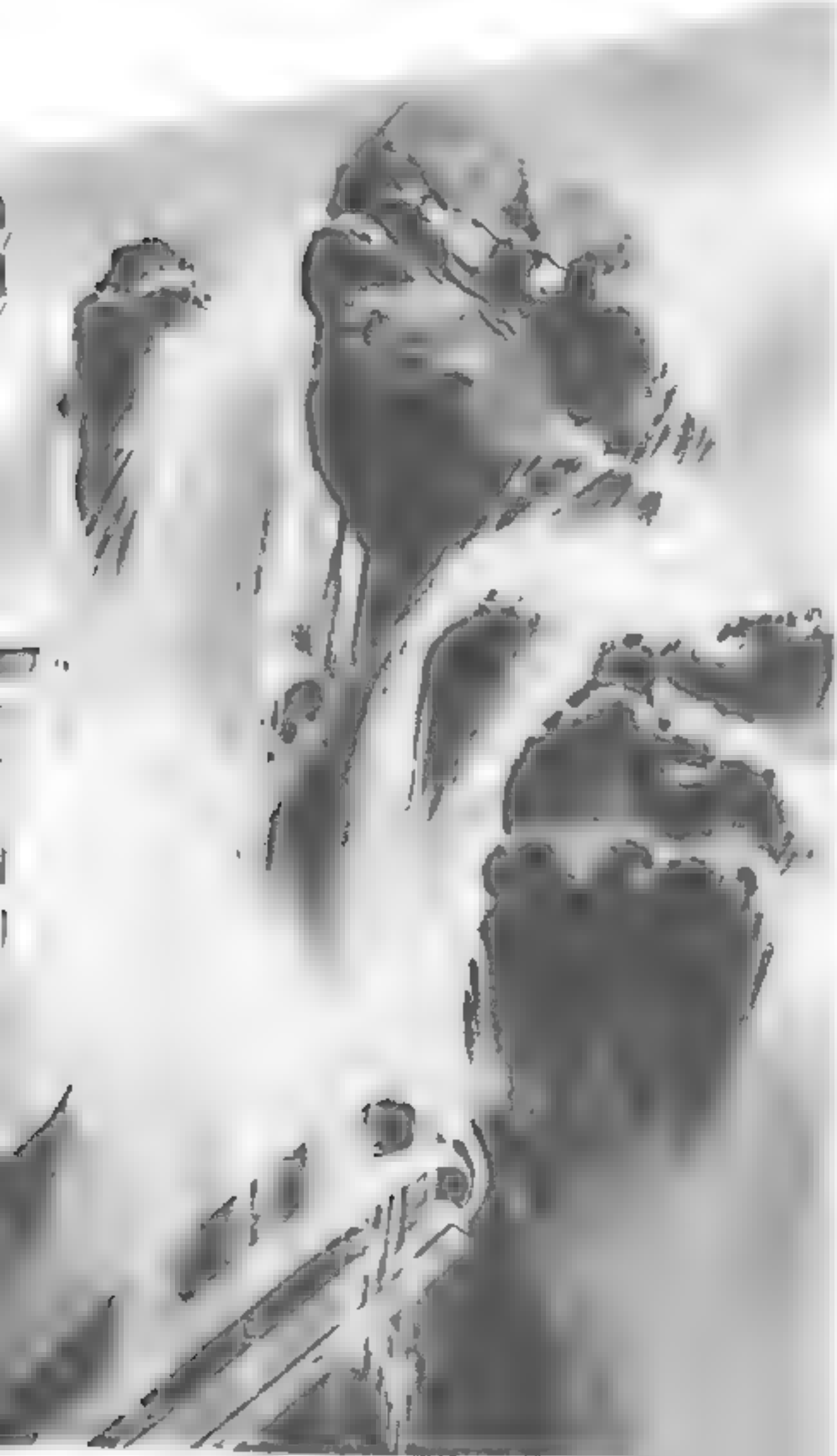
The Bellamys moved to London after the war and there they remained for the rest of Frank's life. It would be 1953, at the age of 36, that Bellamy's first comic strip appeared. Four years later he was working full time for The Eagle producing 'The Happy Warrior' (chronicling the life of Winston





### Andersonville

Then came TV21, 'Thunderbirds', Frank Bellamy and me. Though I was totally immersed with the exploits of everything Marvel Comics could offer, Gerry Anderson in general and TV21 in particular lent my 11 year old mind yet another view of strange 'words'. Everybody loved Anderson's 'Supermarionation' shows; Supercar, Fireball XLS and Stingray were a TV



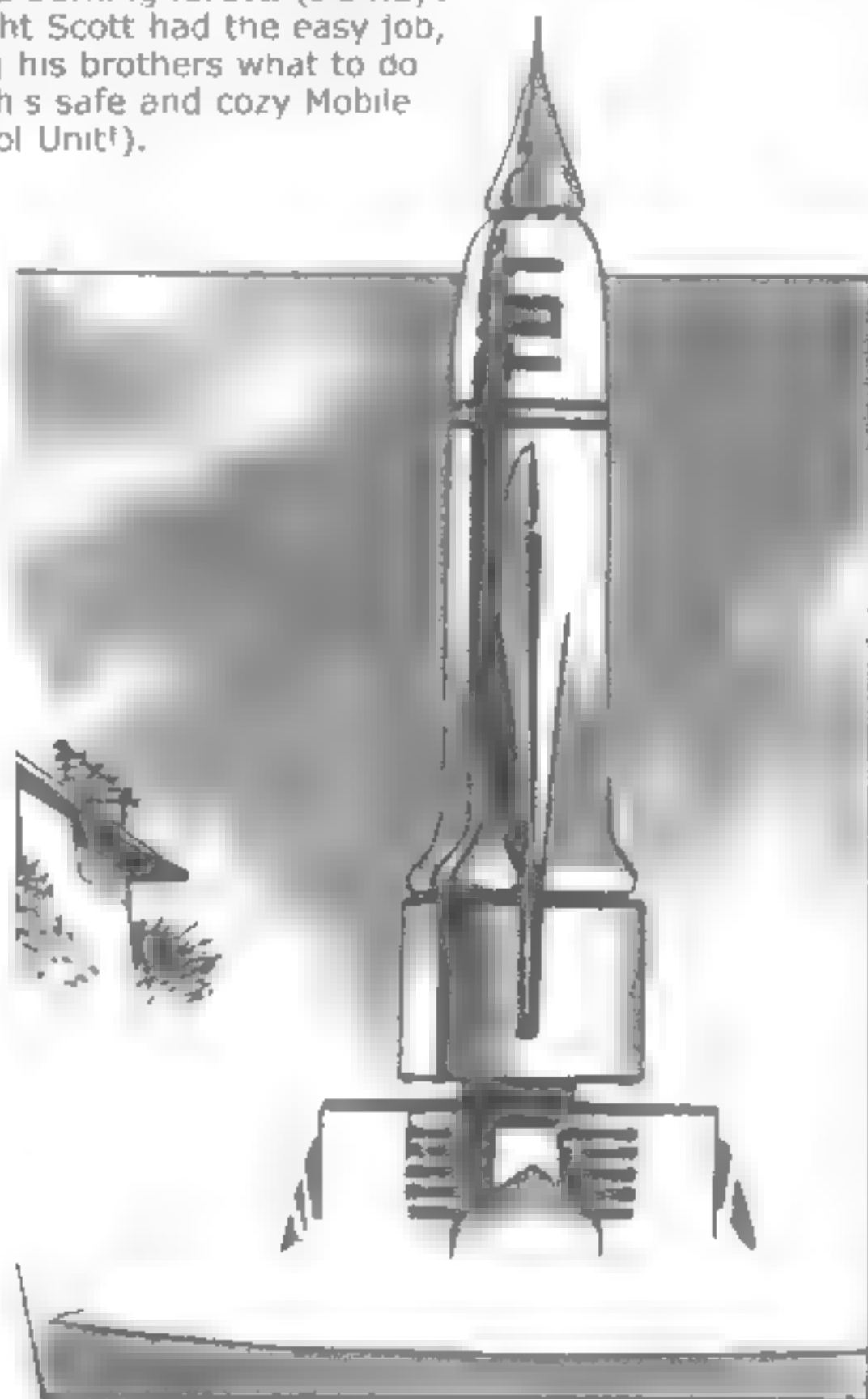
favourites (even my dad would watch them) and now we had them all together in one comic.

I would walk to school with my pal Paul Cook and every Tuesday we would buy our copies of TV21 and rarely speak to each other as we consumed the contents, instantly transported a hundred years into the future. We'd read it again at morning breacktime,



lunchtime, afternoon breaktime and then on the way home, not speaking. And then again that night. Then we'd discuss it for the next week until the following Tuesday came around. I don't know how many kids my age (and above) were mesmerized by this comic, but my guess is it would have to be many thousands.

My world was split into many parts. Sometimes I'd be swinging on a web over Manhattan and then I'd be aboard Zero X fighting strange fire spitting rocky snakes on Mars and then I'd fall back to earth to save rhinos or help Virgil Tracy rescue people from a burning forest. (I always thought Scott had the easy job, telling his brothers what to do from his safe and cozy Mobile Control Unit!).



THE U.S. PLANE WAS NOT DETECTED  
BY THE SOPHISTICATED SCANNERS  
OF INTERNATIONAL RESCUE

EAGLE LEADER  
TO BASE - HAVE LOST  
TARGET-DISPATCH SEARCH  
AIRCRAFT TO REGION  
RETURNING TO NEST

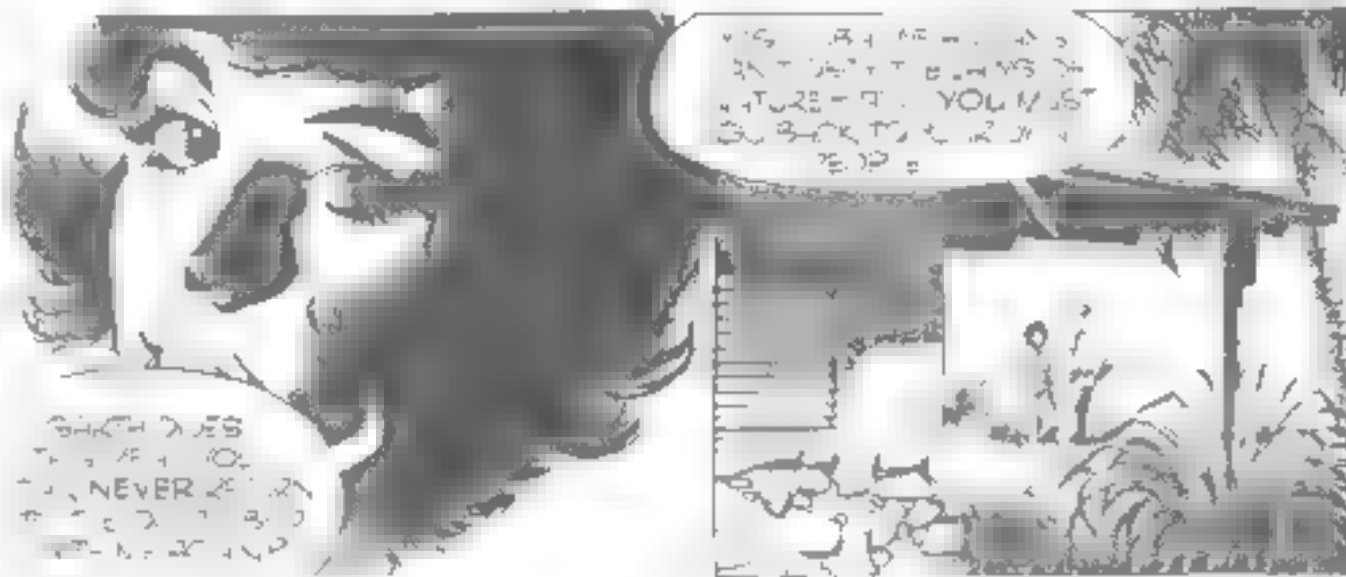
EAGLE SONG  
UNDERSTOOD

TV21 was a comic produced on nice, white, 'smooth paper, in full colour (inside and out) showing us wonderful colours and incredible artwork. Painted artwork. Not like the masters or anything from the classics, but my favourite characters. Not coloured by using little dots added later over black and white artwork that always looked muddy and spoiled the line work (like Marvel and DC), but painted artwork where the use of the white of the page was evident by the lack of a line. Where all the colours could blend and complement each other. Gouache and vibrant inks were being applied lending the art texture and substance. As a kid, I couldn't even begin to copy these techniques (I hate that word - it reminds me of footballers). It was much later that I worked out how to apply them to my own work, so I am partly indebted to Frank for helping me get illustration work in later years.

### Salivating

These strips were vibrant and alive; a real eye opener for me. This was our first glimpse of Anderson's TV shows as they were meant to be seen - dramatic, multi-layered and with a sense of purpose

- not forgetting the striking explosions and the like. Only Don Lawrence, with his 'The Trigan Empire' in Ranger competed against TV21. But, for me, good as The Trigan Empire was and is, TV21 won hands down. As an artist myself, producing my own comics for friends to read and my brothers to destroy, I salivated over the work of Mike Noble, Ron Emberton and Frank



Bellamy. Until that time, I had never seen such contrast, colour and rendering in the comics medium (Eagle had passed me by being only a newspaper in the late fifties).

### Stingray, er ... Thunderbirds

Bellamy had been approached by the editors of TV21 to draw an adaptation of 'Stingray' a full year before the comic eventually hit the newsstands in 1965. Typically, Bellamy turned them down, honouring his commitments to Eagle until his contract expired. Subsequently, his first artwork for TV21 was published in issue 52 (April 1966) and marked the debut of the 'Thunderbirds' strip.

It was worth the wait. Frank is most remembered for his realistic, graphic approach to the work. The characters and vehicles would often break out of the panels (Jack Kirby did the same) and his innovative use of colour enhanced his breath-taking illustrations. Furthermore, Frank's use of perspective gave a view of the Thunderbird craft

SECONDS LATER

FRANK BELLAMY

VIRGIL HEADS  
THUNDERBIRD 2  
TOWARDS THE  
FLAMES...



and buildings never seen before. Ever the perfectionist, Frank used plastercast models of the Thunderbird character heads as reference for his illustrations, moving as far away from a 'cartoony' style as he could, while still retaining the actual puppet characters' charm.

#### Grandeur

Frank's work in particular and Thunderbirds in general became both the standard and the flagship of the comic and many other publications tried their hardest to emulate both the grandeur and the fantastic artwork produced by Bellamy. None did.

Frank exclusively painted all the colour artwork for 'Thunderbirds' from 1966 to 1969, with the exception of issues 93 to 98. As the deadlines for the artwork became ever tighter, the strip was cut from three pages (the third page of every episode was produced in black and white using a tone wash) to two. This gave Frank

more time to render, but less space to tell his story and denied us, the reader, of more artwork. Following his long haul on 'Thunderbirds', Frank produced the opening story pages only for 'Captain Scarlet' for five issues of TV21, all of which appear on the front cover. The interior art for these strips was handled by other artists and clearly, either editorial troubles or deadlines prevented Frank from producing the whole strip.

#### Frankly my dear ...

By late 1969, TV21's popularity was declining rapidly and it merged with Joe 90 comic. The boom times of the '60s, in all areas of life, was rapidly coming to an end and after only a few issues, Bellamy decided to quit the comic book industry completely. His last Anderson related strip was an uninspired black and white 'Thunderbirds' story in Joe 90 issue 4.

Bellamy moved on to provide illustrations for such notable publications as Sunday Times Magazine, where he produced the first colour strips to appear in that newspaper. He also provided an amazing illustration of



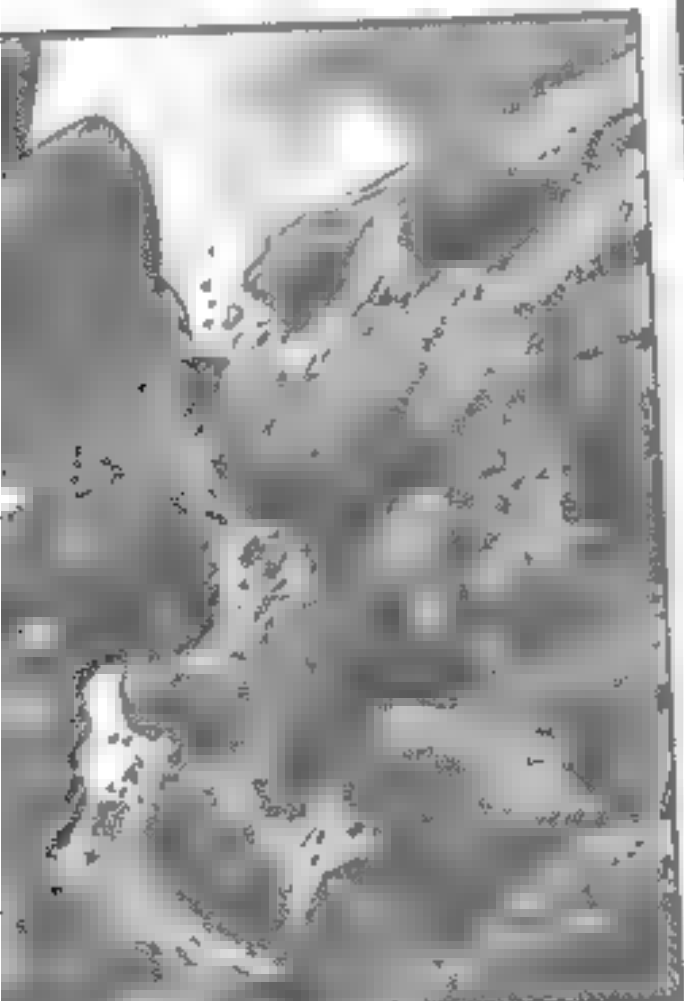
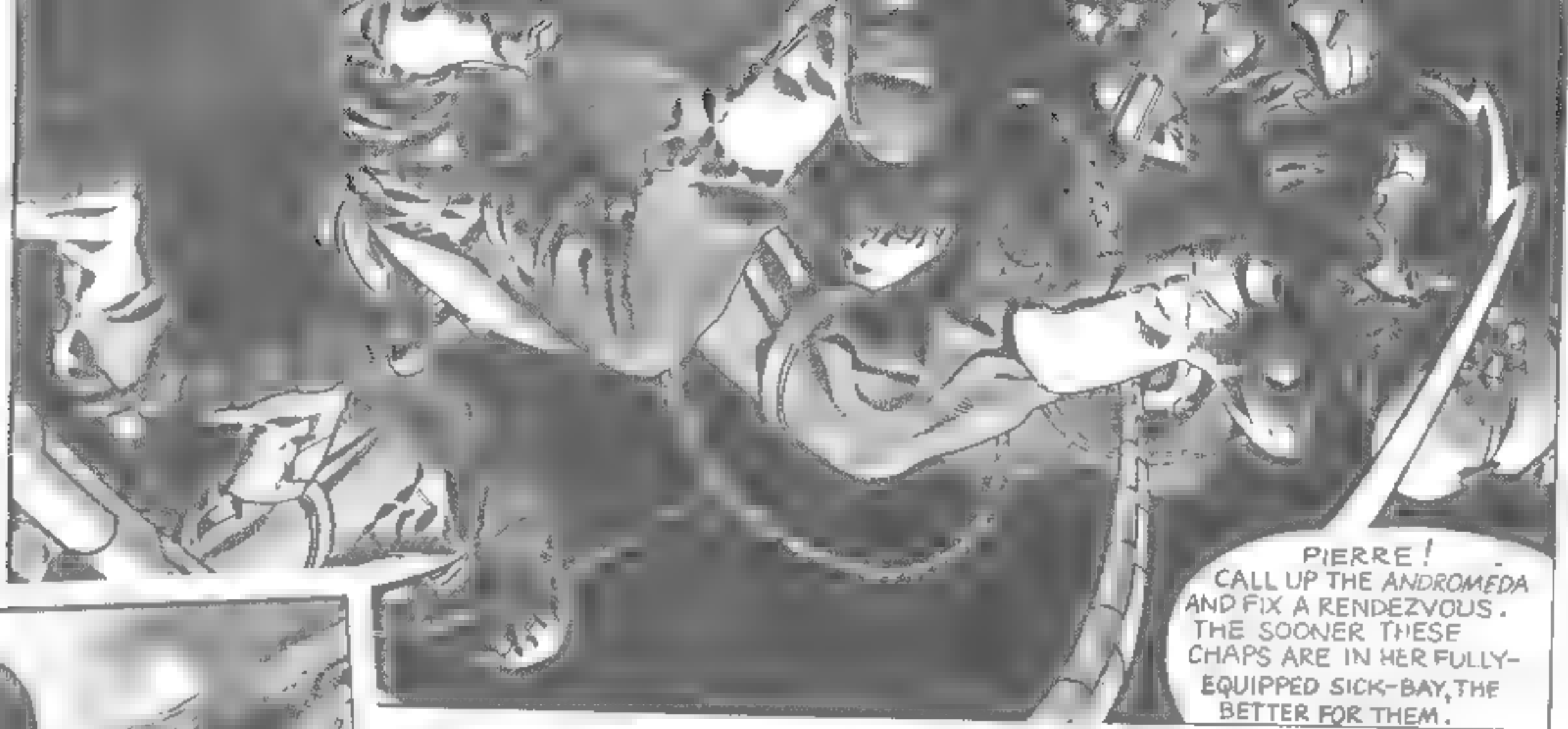
AND WHAT  
OF THESE  
TWO?

SEE THEY ARE  
BURIED WITH DUE  
CEREMONY IN  
TENOCHTITLAN  
A HERO AND A  
KING'S DAUGHTER

But in the moment of  
death the wheel  
of Time has carried parts  
back into the  
present and the hotel  
room in  
Mexico City

ATACAMA'S  
MASK... IT'S  
DROPPED FROM  
THE WALL AND  
SHATTERED...  
BUT CAN  
STILL HEAR  
HER VOICE





### 'Dr Who and the Da eks' for the Radio Times

Just before then, in 1968, Bellamy provided the on-screen artwork for the demented comic strip artist in the weirdly fantastic 'The Winged Avenger' episode of The Avengers. His relationship with the production team was so good that he also designed the villain's costume and the set for the artist's studio.

Bellamy finally settled into the newspaper strip series 'Garth' for the Daily Mirror in 1969. This was a strange period to be reading innocent comics strips. I was buying 'Garth' for the SF elements and fantastic Bellamy artwork (honest!) but was also being exposed to several naked ladies because of the 'flesh wars' between

stippling for tone. Frank didn't have the luxury of colour blends to stun us with, so he did it with pen and ink. Some of Frank's best work can be seen in his tenure on 'Garth'.

Frank Bellamy was still working on 'Garth' when he died as a result of a massive heart attack on the 5th July, 1976 at the age of 59. I still mourn his passing and marvel at his vision, talent and spectacular pieces of artwork. His attention to detail - anatomy, human or otherwise, line, colour and storytelling abilities may have been equalled by a few, but were never surpassed.

In terms of slick line work, Brian Bolland comes close with his almost photographic rendering on Judge Dredd and though a truly great storyteller and letterer, Dave Gibbons' characters tend to be a little stiff



the newly launched Sun and the Daily Mirror.

Again, Bellamy used his knowledge of light and shade to produce stunning artwork in the tiny space allowed for the story. A single 'daily' would comprise not more than three panels in which to recap what had happened, move the story on and provide a cliffhanger.

Because of the nature of newspapers then, this artwork was produced in pure black and white with only cross-hatching or

The scratchy rendering style of Cam Kennedy is a joy to behold and his colour work, too, takes the breath away. But, in my opinion, none of these greats of comics come anywhere near Frank Bellamy who had all these talents rolled into one and more. These are the attributes, then, that lend themselves to the late, truly great Frank Bellamy.

As for me, I just wish I could draw as well as Bolland, Gibbons or Kennedy; if I could, this article might be about me. But, then again, I suspect it is. ■

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# OPENS MIDDAY



play

# MISTY

for me

Haunted fairgrounds, shuttered rooms and trinket laden Freudian boxes await us in the mysterious and moody memento mori of *Misty*. **Tom Sweetman** takes us to the places where the boys dared not tread for fear of little girls. The girls who grew up on *Misty* – the scariest comic ever left on a ghost train!

Few comics can be truly hailed as ahead of their time. The majority of British fodder wallowed in traditional formats and tired tales that were straitjacketed into their restrictive genres. This was certainly true of girls' comics.

Boys were mostly treated to flights of space age fantasy, twisted criminal sagas, wartime heroics, deadly robots and sporting heroes. Girls were often served up the same anorexic diet of harsh governesses, missing fathers, rags to riches pony fanciers and twisted ballet ankles. The stories lurched in a familiar direction and as sure as a midnight feast in a school for wayward young ladies, trundled towards its tearful predestination.

Until *Misty*.

## Sirens

It is not hindsight speaking; *Misty* truly was ahead of its time insofar as it was a girls' comic that also managed to appeal to boys. Appeal is probably the wrong word – *Misty* called out to its male audience with the chilling allure of sirens summoning youthful Argonauts to their rocky doom.

The conceptual genius of a horror anthology aimed at a female market is delightful. Here lies *Misty's* first veil of intrigue. It did not deal in the stalk and slash fare that was beginning to seep into an emergent video and late-night cinema market. Its horror was cleverer than that. The readers who bought *Misty* were, literally, the Children of the Damned. Britain was awash with new wave music and an emergent punk zeitgeist as the nation slipped into the summers of hate that marked the dawn of the eighties.

*Misty* though was an ethereal child in a flowing gown that owed more to the literary sensibilities of

*Wuthering Heights* and *Mandalay* than it did to

Thatcher's Britain. The best ghost stories have an air of unreality and a timeless sense of gossamer strings stretched over cobwebbed memory and that was the gothic majesty summoned up in *Misty's* dark pages.

## Undertones

That a comic could be produced that in its very form conjured up



**'Filled with chills from the midnight world!'**

**Dare you read it alone?**

**Welcome to the mysterious world of MISTY, where the unusual is usual, where the unexpected is expected, where every thrill's a chill. Enjoy your journey through these pages... and the strange lands and people...**



the ghostly nuance that it sought to capture suggests that *Misty* was an aberration from the mainstream. As a title it was actually frightening in its chilling undertones. The dark corridors and haunted woods that formed the backdrop for flowing female forms were other-worldly in their artistic style as well as the narrative framework.

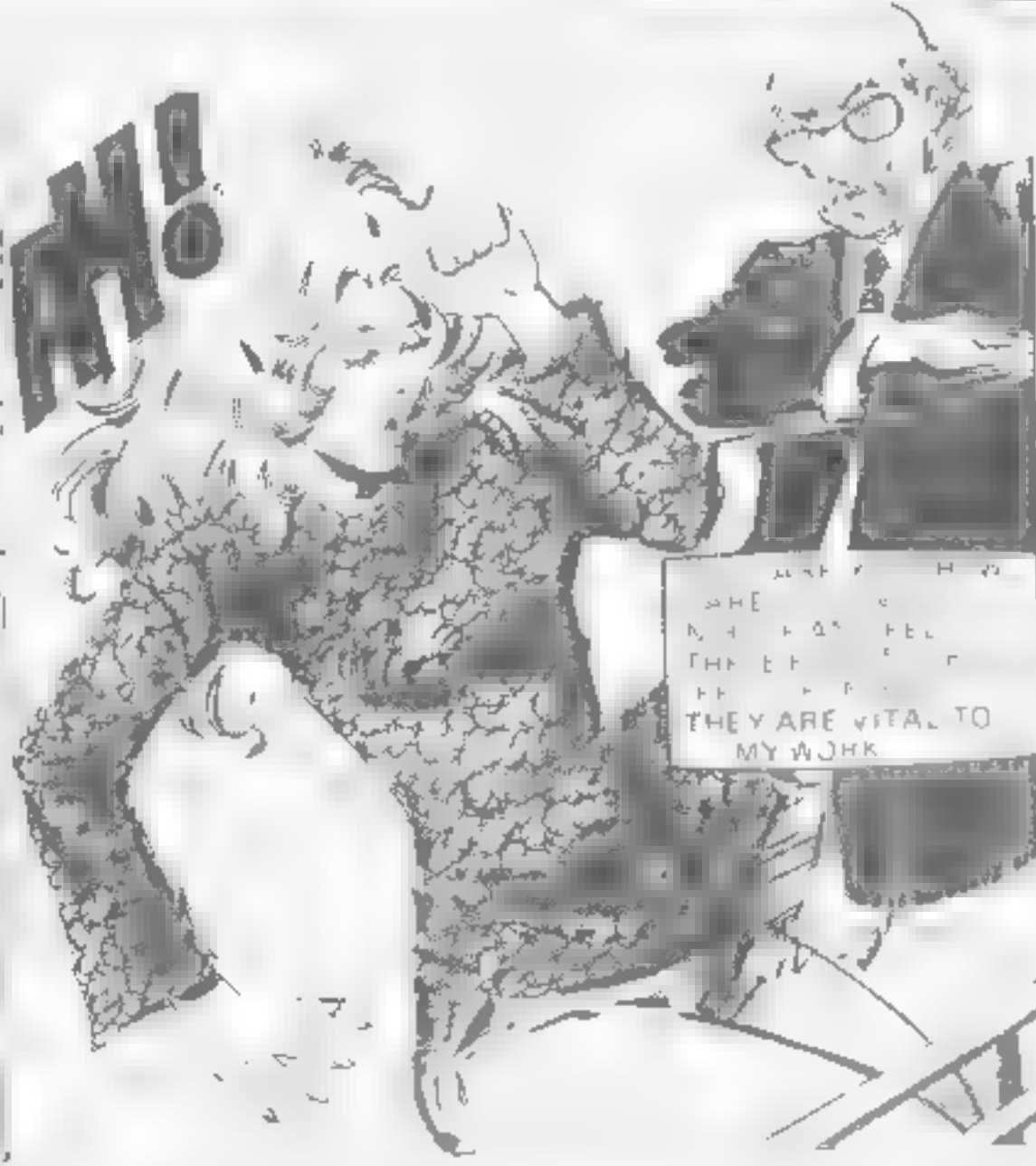
*Misty* dared to offer a metaphorical world that explored nascent and emergent sexuality. It bridged the leap into the world of womanhood, revealing it as fearful and thrilling, deadly and liberating. The sinister subtleties of the stories centred on troubled girls who were often becoming aware of strange feelings and did not quite know what to do about them. Here, perhaps, is the appeal to the male audiences as girls groped in the dark for reality amid their straightforward dreams.

This was not new, of course. Cathy in *Wuthering Heights* and Rebecca in the eponymous novel by Daphne Du Maurier had both possessed the quantities that the *Misty* girls had in abundance. Strong-willed females who were confronted with dark disharmony and found comfort only in death. Goth chicks eat your beating hearts out. Here are your dyed-black roots.

#### Subtlety

To understand the attraction of *Misty* as a concept it is important to understand what lies behind the purple veil. To consider what it is that appeals to girls about horror. The answer requires sensitivity, thoughtfulness and lonely desire. Lads, leave your boots at the door and tread carefully.

# Moonchild





Subtlety was the watchword of the heroines in *Misty*. Just as Lucy and Mina had sighed with fearsome desire at the blood-dream presence of a vampire in Stoker's *Dracula*, the girls in *Misty* seemed to be always searching for solutions, both to the puzzles that surrounded them and their own desires.

The early stories were not as spectral as the tales seen in later issues. Stories were set in high-rise flats and rooted in an urban reality. It wasn't an environment that suited the dreamlike quality of the writing or the slow-motion posing of the protagonists. This urban backdrop was soon left behind as the title displaced its heroines from the familiar and modern to darker and more mysterious worlds.

#### Dark beginnings

The first issue was published on 4th February 1978, beginning a run that was to continue until 19th January 1980 (when it merged with *Tammy* until November 1981). As well as the weekly comic there were also three summer specials, eight annuals and eight *Best of Misty* specials that ran in the mid-eighties. While the comics are sparkling treasures, a less exhaustive introduction to the title would be the easier to find annuals or the collected specials.

The first three free gifts spirited away to readers.





young girls in the style of DC Thomson's *Spellbound* and featured various continuing tales, together with one-off horror stories. The weekly appointment with fear was a subtle brew, suggesting menace rather than plunging headfirst into terror.

A twisted take on teenage fantasy steered the comic and its denizens away from the traditional stories that had been the mainstay of girls' comic fiction. *Misty* girls did not always find their long lost father. Nor did they always recover their lost heritage as a deposed princess - and they certainly did not conform to the stereotypes that had troubled lesser titles for years.

One fondly remembered story appeared in the first 13 issues (and later collected in the 1986 annual). John Armstrong's 'Moonchild' set the tone for the comic and showed just how finely the narratives were tuned to the popular culture of the period. 'Moonchild' was 'inspired' by the blockbuster horror film *Carrie* with its central character Carrie White replaced by the enigmatic Rosemary Black, the Moonchild.

The opening page laid the ground rules for what was to follow with the tantalising teaser, 'In every school there's a girl who all the others pick on ... but what happens if the girl discovers she has. THE POWER!'

### Strange

Moonchild had a widowed mother with a predilection for beating her daughter and locking her in the cupboard. The young girl did not have too good a time of it at school either where she was picked on for being old fashioned and strange. An attempt by a friend to cut Rosemary's hair led to an unleashing of jealous fervour that culminated in her developing her telekinetic attributes.

Knives don't fly but Rosemary soon realises that she has the power to avoid further beatings from her mother when she discovers her powers are heightened in times of high trauma - such as when her friend looks like being

suggested the tone of what was to follow. While boys were chasing each other round the schoolyard with Thunder Bangers, cardboard guns and football league table ladders, *Misty* girls were resplendent in their Blue Fish Lucky Charm bracelet and Egyptian Cat Ring. Or writing down their inner thoughts on secreted slips of paper in their Wheel of Fortune Wallet.

A quick look at eBay confirms that there are still bargains to be had. I recently saw 10 issues of the Tammy-Misty Frankencomic on offer for less than a fiver. The annuals can also be found, ranging from a giveaway £2.50 to a speculative £15. The 1980 Holiday Special recently sold for £30, reflecting the general scarcity of Summer Specials throughout the British comic collecting hobby rather than just the *Misty* connection. A lot of Summer Specials were bought on the way to holiday haunts (particularly appropriate in this case) and left behind when the family returned to normality. Visions of seaside guesthouses with parlours piled high with Holiday Specials abound - but that's another ghostly fantasy!

### Twisted

The IPC produced comic was aimed at





Stephen King to make the connection between puberty and power

The promise of revenge on bullies, power over a wicked parent and the ability to shape a world through the power of thought were certainly powerful attributes and ones that many girls must have coveted in their heroine. Perhaps here lay the appeal not just of 'Moonchild' but for the majority of the girls that Misty championed.

The power to retreat from a reality where control lay in the hands of parents, male figures and the more oppressive members of the sisterhood was a powerful potion that allowed the reader into a world more intoxicating than a pop star's smile and more forbidden than the promise of a first date.

Carrie White may burn in hell – to quote the movie's denouement – but a much more pleasant ending awaited her comic book counterpart. Girls could face up to their problems and there were happy endings for the hippie chick/goth girl who was willing to trust her emotions and stand up against the forces that oppressed her.

### **Misty again**

Similarly there is hope still for the comic that time forgot. Misty is undergoing something of a revival at the moment. The excellent web site hosted at [www.mistystycomic.co.uk](http://www.mistystycomic.co.uk) has more features than you could shake a magic stick at. From a page by page guide to all of the comics through to news on the future of a comic that was thought to have drifted away like an ethereal breeze.

Yes, rumours of Misty's demise have been exaggerated and you can now pick up all of those hard to get issues in PDF format on CD-Rom or (and this really is exciting) there are new tales to be told as submissions are being encouraged for a brand new Misty comic.

It would be heartening to think that the creativity and strangeness that characterised the original comics could be reincarnated. To think that we can once again treasure a period where intelligence, thought and absolute sensual sensitivity went into the creation of some of the best comic strip literature ever produced for girls. The original

comics are a hard act to follow but there are ghostly voices crying in gothic chapels out there that are willing the spirit to be re-ignited.

This time the lads will be at the front of the queue! ■

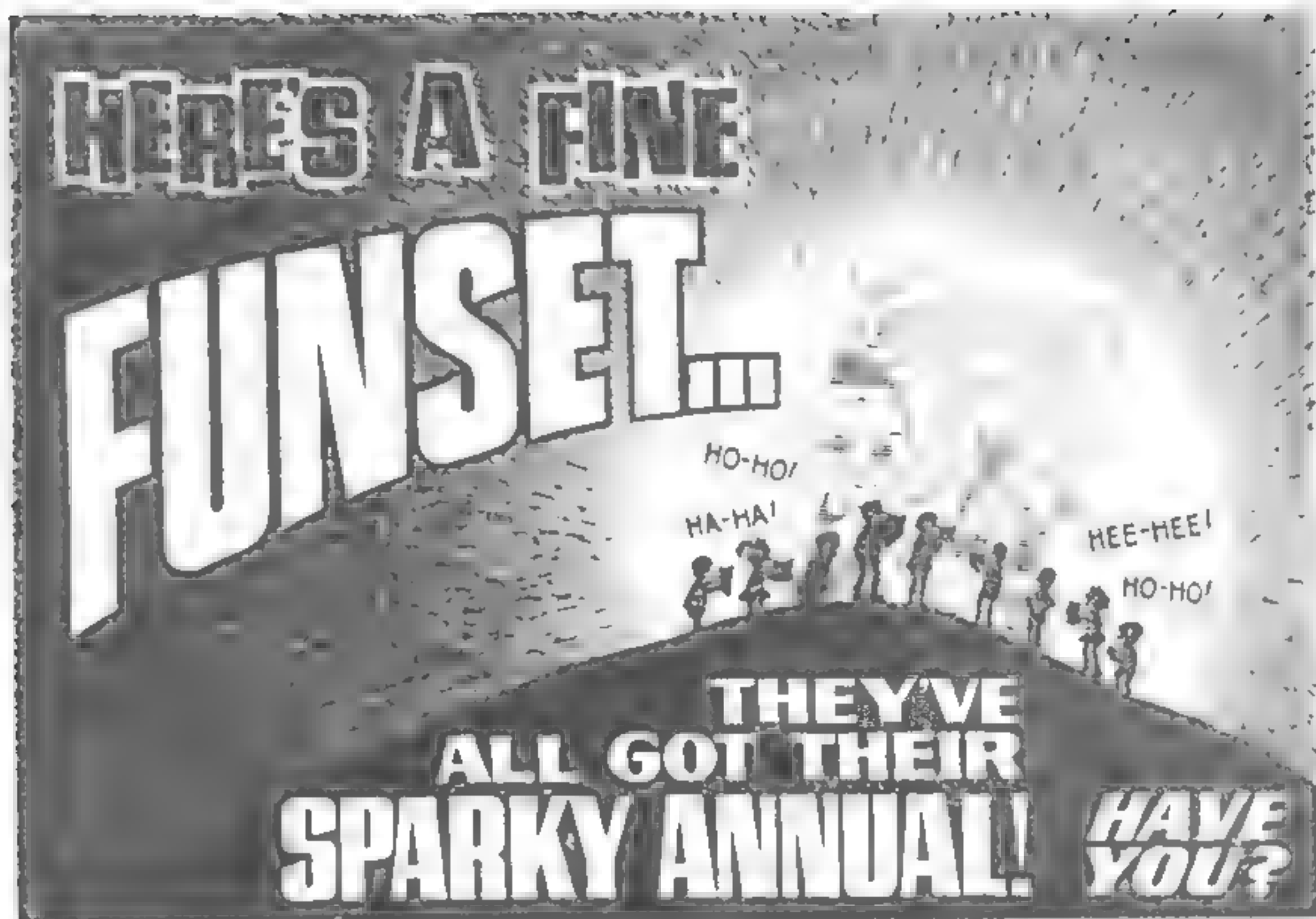
sent to the great Misty woods in the sky by a runaway truck.

The mark of the Moonchild is on Rosemary's brow. Circumstances conspire to force her to unconsciously release her powers, no doubt fuelled by her concealed spiritual and psychological traumas. It didn't take a

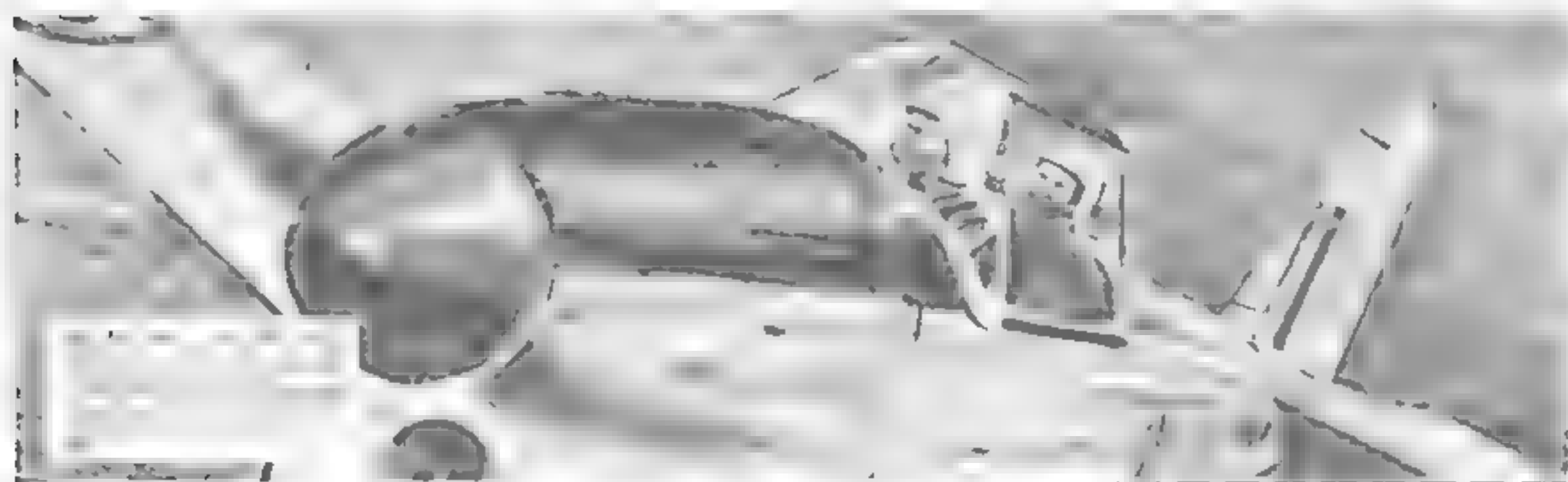
IN A KIND OF DAZE I PICKED IT UP

HELLO OH MY MUMMY I CAN'T SPEAK TO MY NEE





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got a hobby?



Get your wings

Learn about flying

Learn to shoot



Travel and meet people

Make new friends

Learn about electronics

Learn about computers

Visit Air Cadet  
Spots



Send now for  
this leaflet



DATE OF BIRTH

# WHAM!

## The Funniest Comic in the World!

*The idea behind this feature is dead simple (but you still need to pay attention at the back!). Each issue of Crikey! will give space for a writer to champion a claim for a certain comic or type of product to have been the best of its type EVER! Future issues of Crikey! might have someone champion the Best Free Gift – EVER! Or the Best Girls' Comic – EVER! As soon as you get your thinking cap on you'll see that the list is endless.*

*So get writing!*



*Wham!* was born out of Baxendale's love for 'Little Plum', the mischievous (un)brave of the prairie. Or maybe it was born out of his unrelenting workload. Or perhaps his dream of creating a Super-Beano as Britain's first monthly comic. Or possibly it was the argument over

what size drawings Leo should be presenting to the editor of the *Beano*. Of course, the real answer is all the above because big changes rarely have a single cause.

Those of you unfortunate enough to have never been exposed to the comic strip genius of 'Grimly Fiendish', 'General Nitt and his Barmy Army', 'Georgie's Germs', 'Danny Dare', 'Pest of the West' or the 'Humbugs' (to name but a few) have a good case from which to argue a retrial when you meet St Peter at the Pearly Gates. You have been sold short in this life, my friend.

### Roots

*Wham!* was the creation of Leo Baxendale, Britain's answer to Jack Kirby (but with more jokes and fewer forced perspectives). Its language, visual style and off the wall humour was a comedic cross between Hancock,

*The Goons* and the manic mayhem of the Marx Brothers. It took the idea of frenetic free-for-alls to another level with its use of bizarre background creatures, editorial signs dropped into panels and the fact that *Wham!* characters were nearly always running either to or from something.

The road to *Wham!* might best be said have begun with a phone call Baxendale received around April 1962 from Harold Cramond, the editor of the *Beano* telling him he was off 'Little Plum'. This was a triple shock to the writer and artist. Firstly, the decision had come out of the blue, underlining the insecurity of a freelancer's life. Secondly, Plum was Baxendale's favourite strip and thirdly – and a fact that really got at Baxendale, it was his creation (even if it was a conscious swipe of 'Dennis the Menace').

Okay, Cramond had a good case for reducing Baxendale's workload – after all the artist/writer was consistently late with his artwork – but it was the way in which the strip had been taken from him that annoyed Baxendale. No discussion. No warning. Just a call from the publisher in Dundee and the strip was gone.

### Trouble

The next step on the road to *Wham!* was probably Baxendale's decision to reduce the size of artwork supplied to DCT. He was finding it very hard keeping to deadlines, even with his 'Plum assignment' now in the hands of others. DCT artwork at the time was normally drawn twice-up – requiring the artist to fill four times the area as it appeared in the published comic.

Baxendale found this very time consuming and knew that his style didn't benefit from the reduction in size on publication. The larger size not only tightened up the inework but made it easier to draw minute background details. An adventure artist such as Paddy Brennan who drew 'General Jumbo' and 'Longlegs the Desert Wild Boy', benefited from this arrangement but for a humour artist with Baxendale's loose style it just made the job that much longer.

In an effort to save time, Baxendale changed the size from twice-up to 25%-up, meaning his four times area was reduced to one-and-a-half times the area. This was

a considerable time saving for the artist and should have allowed him to meet his deadlines without having to work 16 hours a day. He submitted a new-sized 'Banana Bunch' story to Iain Chisholm, the *Beezer* editor, and a new-sized 'Bash Street Kids' to Cramond at the *Beano*.

Chisholm reacted well to Baxendale's innovation, readily accepting the new size. Cramond's reaction was very different. There was no way he was going to accept the new size and he demanded that Baxendale redraw the story at the original twice-up size. Baxendale declined (to put it mildly).

And that's how Leo Baxendale left DCT.

### **Freedom**

Now that Baxendale was free to freelance again he soon found himself talking to Alf Wallace and Albert Cosser at Odhams, where he found receptive ears to his plans to launch a Super-Beano. This was right at the start of what eventually became the Power Comics imprint with Alf and Cos doing their best to be half-and-half Stan Lees.

One immediate effect of joining Odhams to work on the new project was the sudden and dramatic increase in Baxendale's earnings. At DCT he had been earning approximately £4000 a year. That now doubled to £8000 – a very respectable wage in 1964 (about the same salary that the cast of *Coronation Street* received). Furthermore, the deal allowed him to sign all his work (something not allowed at DCT, except in the case of Dudley Watkins) and to be paid for any scripts he provided. This was another improvement from his DCT arrangement where the artist was encouraged to provide the script. (It was rumoured that invoices for these scripts still went through the accounts department but no payments were made to the artists, say no more, nudge, nudge, know-what-I-mean...)

### **Wham!**

A format was beginning to come together and Baxendale was able to think about how much direct involvement he himself wanted in the new title – and

EVERYONE'S AFTER THE WONDERFUL NEW

# WHAM!

## ANNUAL 1966



**Ahh, Christmas 1965. I spent that day with my chums from *Wham!***

which other artists and writers he wanted to work with. This was something he had high hopes for and he saw the new comic as a way to get a team of creators in place to move on to his ultimate dream, the Super-Beano.

With only rare exceptions Britain had a tradition of two-syllable words being used as comic titles – *Dandy*, *Beano*, *Eagle*, *Comet* etc. As one of the ways to signpost how different this project was to be, Baxendale wanted a short explosive word to get over the energy and madcap lunacy behind the new comic. It didn't take long before he realised that the best way forward would be to use a sound effect to get over the impact and



settled on *Wham!*

Something must have been in the air around that time – or maybe Baxendale took an interest in Pop Art – because in the same year Roy Lichtenstein produced his 'two panel' *Wham!* paintings showing a jet fighter firing an exploding rocket. The 'sound effect concept' was destined to be carried further, of course, when Power Comics launched further groundbreaking comics like *Smash!* and *Pow!*

### Creators

Now it was time to sit down and actually create the comic and what came out of the behind-the-scenes politicking and cajoling was a roster of some of the zaniest and most creative humour strips ever seen.

Baxendale wanted to poach DCT editor Walter Fearn, a man whom he respected not only for his precise editing and understanding of kids humour but also for his economical, punchy and highly inventive scriptwriting abilities. This was not to be, however, as a *fait accompli* had already taken place at Odham's head office with Albert Cosser having been appointed editor by Alf Wallace. Although Baxendale found Cos to be an excellent editor he always regretted the loss of Fearn's creativity and felt that *Wham!* would have been even zanier with his old friend on board.

Next came the most visible element of the comic – the artists. Baxendale had a definite vision for what *Wham!* should look like and that meant going after the funniest and most stylish of the artists in the business. Right at the top of his list was madcap Davey Law who drew (and mostly wrote) 'Dennis the Menace' (*Beano*), Beryl the Peril (*Topper*) and 'Corporal Clott' (*Dandy*). His deceptively simple linework underpinned a brilliant sense of storytelling and the ability to make the normal look ludicrous. A further consideration was that Law's artwork, together with Baxendale's own, had set the visual style for the *Beano* and if he was able to get Law involved in *Wham!* he would be that much closer to getting his long fought for Super-*Beano* somewhere down the line.

At that time Law was earning £13 a page, giving him an income of £65 a week. Baxendale felt that his offer of £30 a page would bowl Law over and win him to the new comic. He was therefore stunned when the artist thanked him for the offer but declined. What Baxendale didn't know at the time, however, was that Law was a kind of 'quantum-freelancer' – existing in two states at the one time, being both on staff and a freelancer working from home.

Like Dudley Watkins (best remembered now for *The Broons* and *Oor Wullie*) Law had once been a staff artist at DCT. Although he now worked from home and was paid a page rate, he retained a DCT pension and had the security of regular work.

### Bizarre

Baxendale was more successful with his next artist, the lovingly bizarre Ken Reid (think 'Fudge', early 'Roger the Dodger' and 'Face Ache'), although it did result in Reid having a falling out with DCT where he had been drawing the sailor's nightmare 'Jonah'. At *Wham!* he created the visually stunning 'Frankie Stein', (inspired by the then success of *Addams Family* and *Munsters*) and the penny-pinching Scrooge wannabe 'Jasper the Grasper'. His highly exaggerated facial expressions and unatic poses gave his artwork an eerie nightmarish quality that suited the damaged, losers-in-life characters he worked on.

Things were starting to come together for 33-year-old Baxendale – so the Great God of Comics decided to mess things up a bit!

Early conversations with Odhams (and not Oldhams, as I used to call them as a kid) had left Baxendale with the impression that *Wham!* was to be a 16 page comic. No, said the Great God of Comics – it's to be 24 pages, a whacking 50% increase in the planned-for workload. Things were getting dangerously urgent. After all, this was a weekly comic with specials and annuals also planned for later in the year.

HE'S FIRST IN EVERYTHING

WHAT'S THIS S LLY GAME YOU'RE PLAYIN THEN?

GO IT NVENTED

YOU GET SOMETHIN R NE ANL FEN TRY TO M T INTO A HOLE

SOUNDS A SOPPY OL GAME

ME EASY

RO NO DUBH E AN A BFN T H AN W S WHL C B E A ?

POW!

BET YOU CANT UP BET FR T AN THAT R MP

POW!

I'VE WON I'VE WON

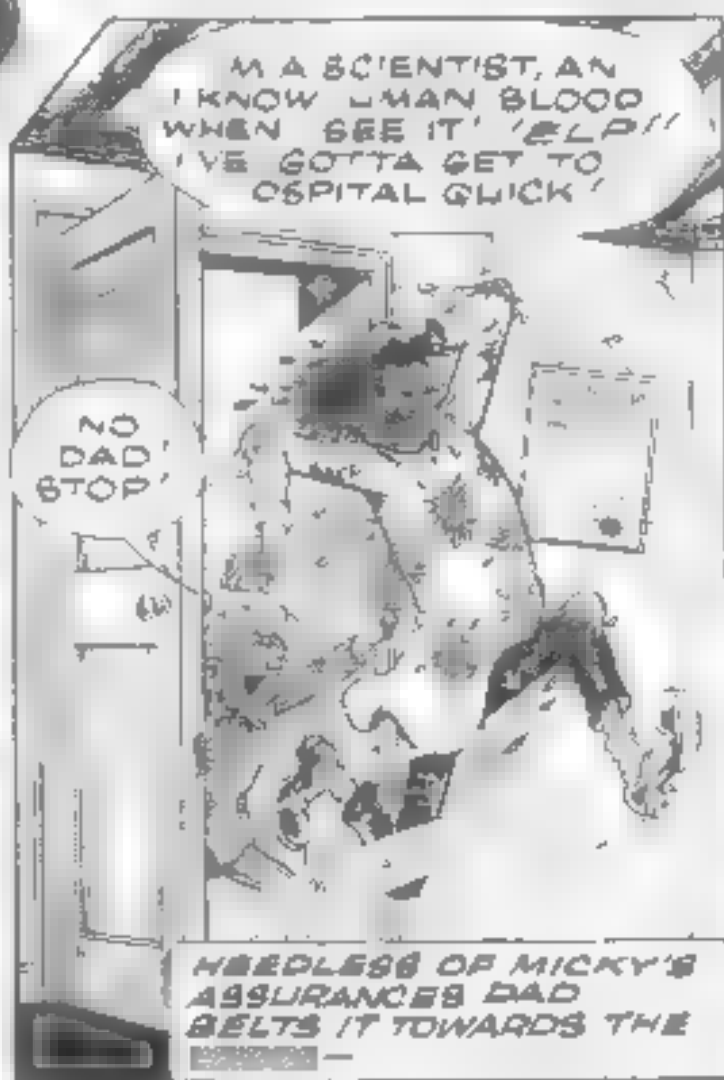
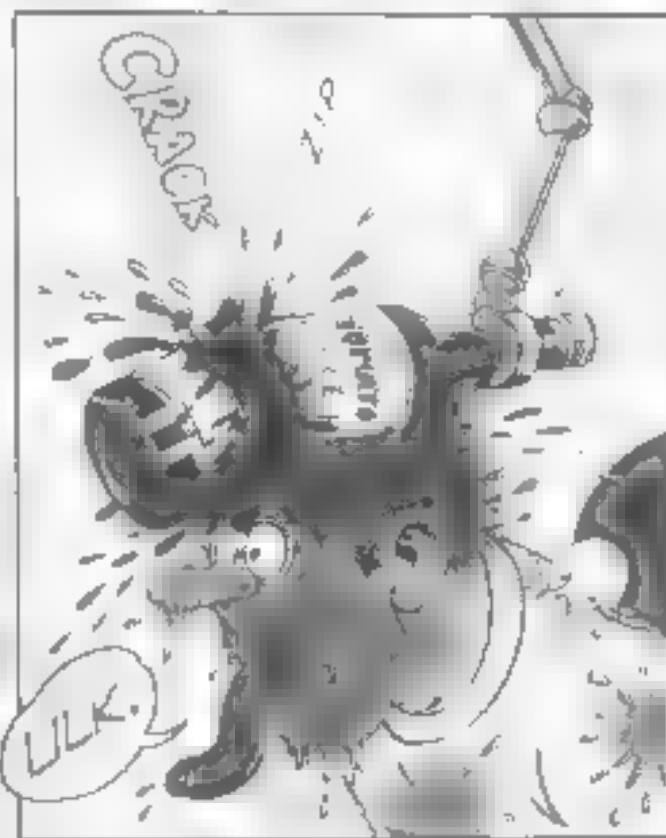
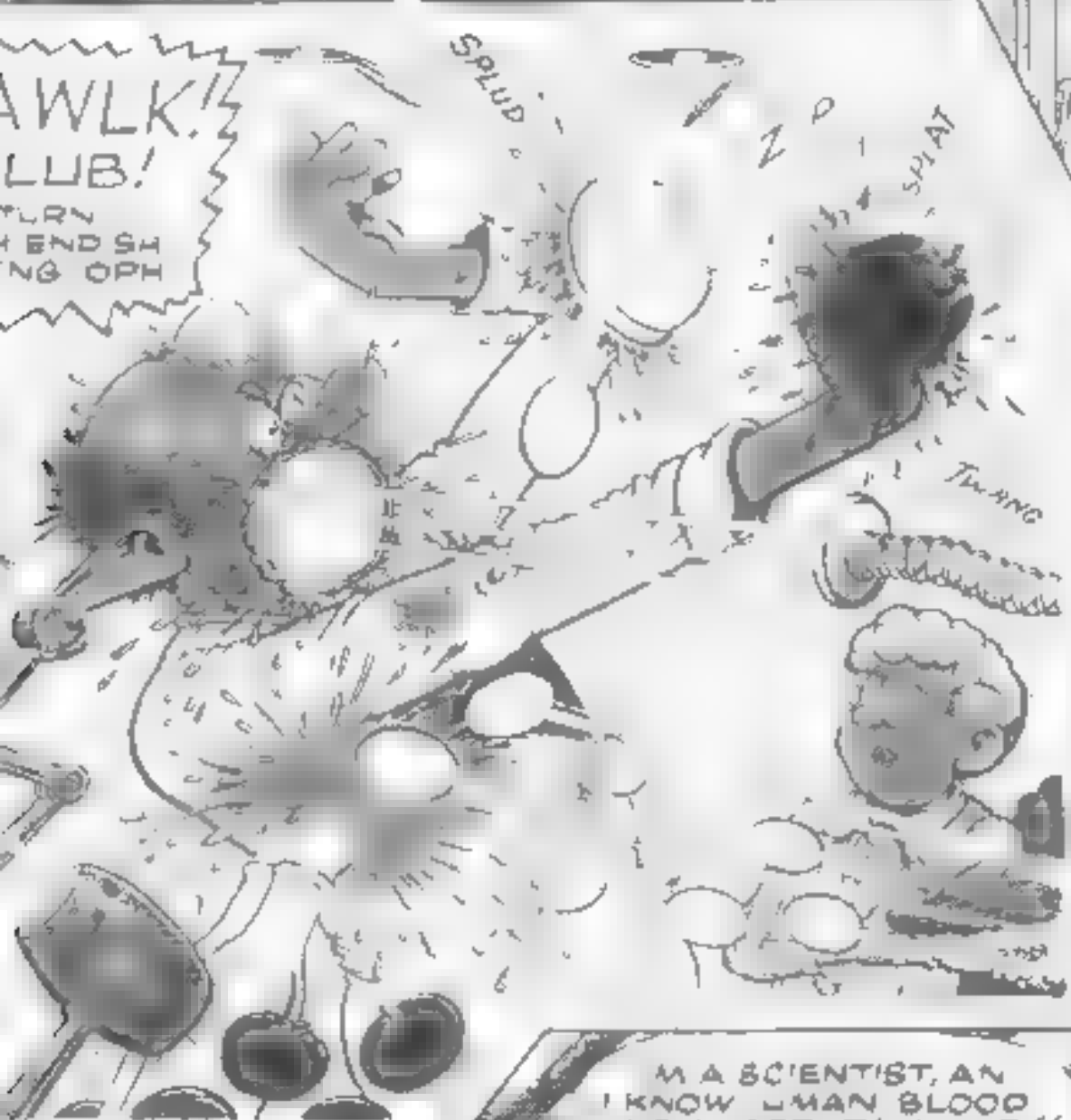
I'VE BEEN DIDDLEO! IT'S A FOD

TH NT YOU H V N AT RA N V N H ANE AN NY NT K I F L

D. B. 1984

Another creation was 'General Nitt and his Barmy Army'; a would-be conqueror set in medieval times. Nitt and his men would have weekly mass charges against enemy armies, resulting in giant panel mayhem as the

Baxendale's love of large ensemble strips (Nitt, Bash Street...) showed up again in his next feature, 'Georgie's Germs'. Georgie himself was mostly passive as the strip focused on the legions of germs in his hair, nose, ears and wherever else Baxendale thought fun could be had (but a l, of course, in the best possible taste). The Germs were under the command of besieged leader Dan Druff as he rallied his troops in their constant battle against Georgie's mum and her best attempt to wipe



nto fervent invent on In short succession he created 'The Whacks' (ever smiling Scousers w th eyes on making it as pop stars), 'Biff' (hard-faced red jumpered version of Dennis but without the menace), 'Danny Dare' (Dan Dare's number one fan with a wooden 'bogey' for a spaceship), 'Humbugs' (annoying tw ns with far too much energy), 'Pest of the West' (k ddie out aw in the days of the Old West) and 'Footsie the Clown' (giant-footed simpleton with a great line in v sua slapstick)

W th such a roster of characters, *Wham!* needed to re y on more than just the overworked art sts for scr pt ideas To kick start the ideas and to ensure that each story had an appropriate beginning, middle and end w th its own sat sfying pay-off, *Wham!* brought in veteran scriptwriter Walter Thorburn. Walter had worked w th Baxendale on 'The Banana Bunch' and had proved himself on many occasions to be on the same wavelength as Baxendale's skewed Goons- sh wor d view

Well, it made me laugh Launched at a dearer than normal price of 6d (3p, or thereabouts, twice the price of the *Beano*) with a 500,000 copy distribution, *Wham!* sold reasonably well At its higher cover price it didn't need to sel as many copies as other comics to be worthwhile for newsagents to keep on the she f

*Wham!* ran for four years

until it merged w th *Smash* in July 1968. During its run it managed to produce some of the best humour work ever to appear in British comics including the almost 40 years since its demise. If you get the chance to pick up a coup e of back issues (or the annuals) at your usua haunts, do so.

For fans of classic humour strips *Wham!* is unmissable ■

them out with soap, shampoo and other forms of chemical attack.

Then next came the 'Tiddlers', a rather lame attempt at re inventing Bash Street but without the attention to character design that had helped make Danny and his classmates such firm favourites. Of all the Baxendale creations for *Wham!* this is the one that shows the least originality in both concept and execution

W th the pressure of deadlines now on, Baxendale went

# The Devil in the Shop

By Tom Sweetman

You might find this difficult to believe but papershops were once magical places. My memories of comics are seasoned with an almost fetishistic set of images associated with the sheer sensual barrage that accompanies such nostalgic rambling. The sounds, smells and feel of my childhood newsagent are as ingrained in my cerebral pathways as are the antics of *Colonel Bink*, *The TV Terrors* or *Hungry Horace*.

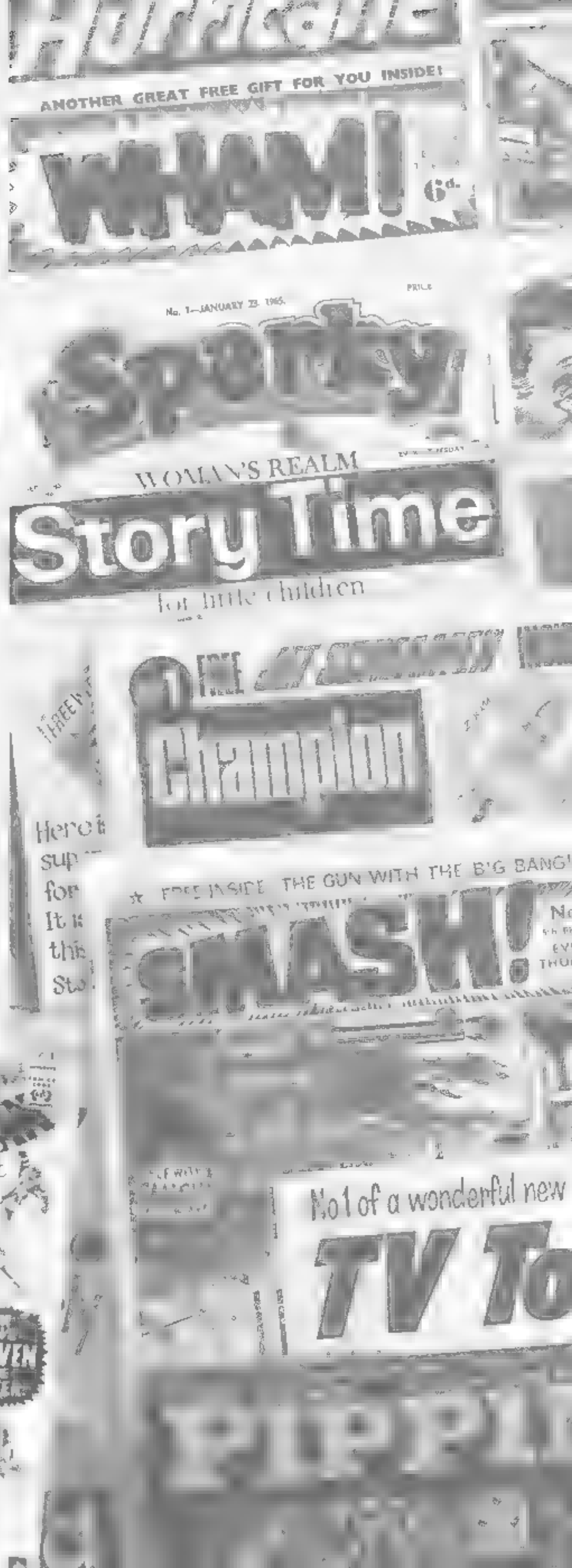
If by chance this magazine falls into the hands of your children or even, dare I presume, your grandchildren (the way *Parade* used to fall into our hands) they will probably not recognise any of what follows. The past is a foreign country – they do things differently there! Nowadays, to coin an old man term, they have multi-channelled, cross-themed, silicon-chipped, comic emporium dreams – we had a musty old room and a chap who always had a cigarette in his mouth.

Well, I did.

I had Barnsies!

Before you reach for your medical dictionaries, let me explain that with hindsight I now realise that the shop was probably owned by a Mr. Barnes and was called Barnes Papershop. But the place that existed beyond the viaduct and the Red Rec' in Ardwick will always exist in my memory lanes as Barnsies. Are you ready for the virtual tour?

The door was chipped paint and through the holes in the card you could glimpse the back of the American comics





that were racked with wire along his board  
That was the place where I first saw  
*Spiderman 47* and the awesome image of  
*Kraven the Hunter* surrounded by little  
Spideermen. A glistening white cover, pristine  
and inviting and – oh, hang on, it's the British  
comics that we are here to see! They are on  
the counter, neatly arranged to overlap each  
other. Stacks that only reveal the banner  
titles. The covers weren't important and the  
numbers didn't matter. You knew they were  
new because you knew what day of the week  
it was and that was all that mattered.

On the odd occasion that the comics were  
late, they simply were not there. There would  
be no Beano masthead as all the copies from  
the week before had sold and the stack would  
be re-arranged to make room when the new  
ones arrived. Comics to the left of you,  
Newspapers in the middle and *Titbits* and  
*Weekend* to the right.

In my memory I always seem to be standing  
behind women with rain dripping from coats  
and umbrellas on to linoleum floors that  
glistened and reflected the lights

Newsagent was probably the wrong term for  
Barnsies. This was your *Waterstones*,  
*Thorntons*, *Hamleys* and *Woolworths* rolled  
into one tobacco scented, newsprint stained  
convenience store dedicated to the joys of  
visual and oral recreation. Along the shelves  
was the chocolate and beyond the chocolate  
were the books, the annuals and the toys.

sticker albums with flags from around the  
world or football heroes

fold out cardboard tanks in woodchip  
paper books

tin mountains with clockwork cable cars  
no bigger than your thumb

better bows and arrows than the rag 'n'  
bone man gave away

shiny boxes of Dalek merchandise

a card of black and gold *U.N.C.L.E.* badges

*Look and Learn* magazine

bumper fun editions

summer specials

and shining in all their colourful glory, the  
annuals

One night I became the literal kid in the  
sweet shop! I don't recall the full details –  
childhood is like that. You end up in rooms

and don't know why. Houses where they have different sauce bottles and you learn new words like ointment. Where they watch BBC rather than ITV. Playing out on streets that have hedges rather than tarmac with kids you have never seen before and that you never see again but become your best friends for two hours. Wearing a red cardigan rather than a grey jumper.

Childhood is like that

One night for reasons that probably involve serendipity, dentists and Kiwi Guard shoe polish I ended up being babysat at Barnsies. My Mam and Dad (they weren't called parents back then) were going out somewhere – and it wasn't even New Year's Eve – and I was staying above the papershop with Frank and Wilhemina (how should I know) Barnes. Their room was filled with comfy furniture and a Formica table. In the corner, their teenage lad was constantly combing his hair in a mirror – he looked like a Beatie and was going out for the night. Black suit, tie and shoeshine.

I had feasted in Billy Bunter style on crisps and then came the moment of madness that cemented so many of the future paths I was to wander down.

'Rather than just sitting there, lad, do you want to go down in the shop and read some comics?' How could life get any better than this?

'... and while you're there, help yourself to any chocolate that you fancy!'

Tumbling. Dancing. No breath anymore. Colours swirling and images that leapt out of darkness. I didn't know where the lights were and surveyed the wonders by the moonlight that shone through the toy-strewn window.

I already had all the comics that were on the counter, though for a moment I toyed with the idea of reading a few girls' stories – that would be a waste though.

There on a shelf before me were the Christmas annuals for that year.

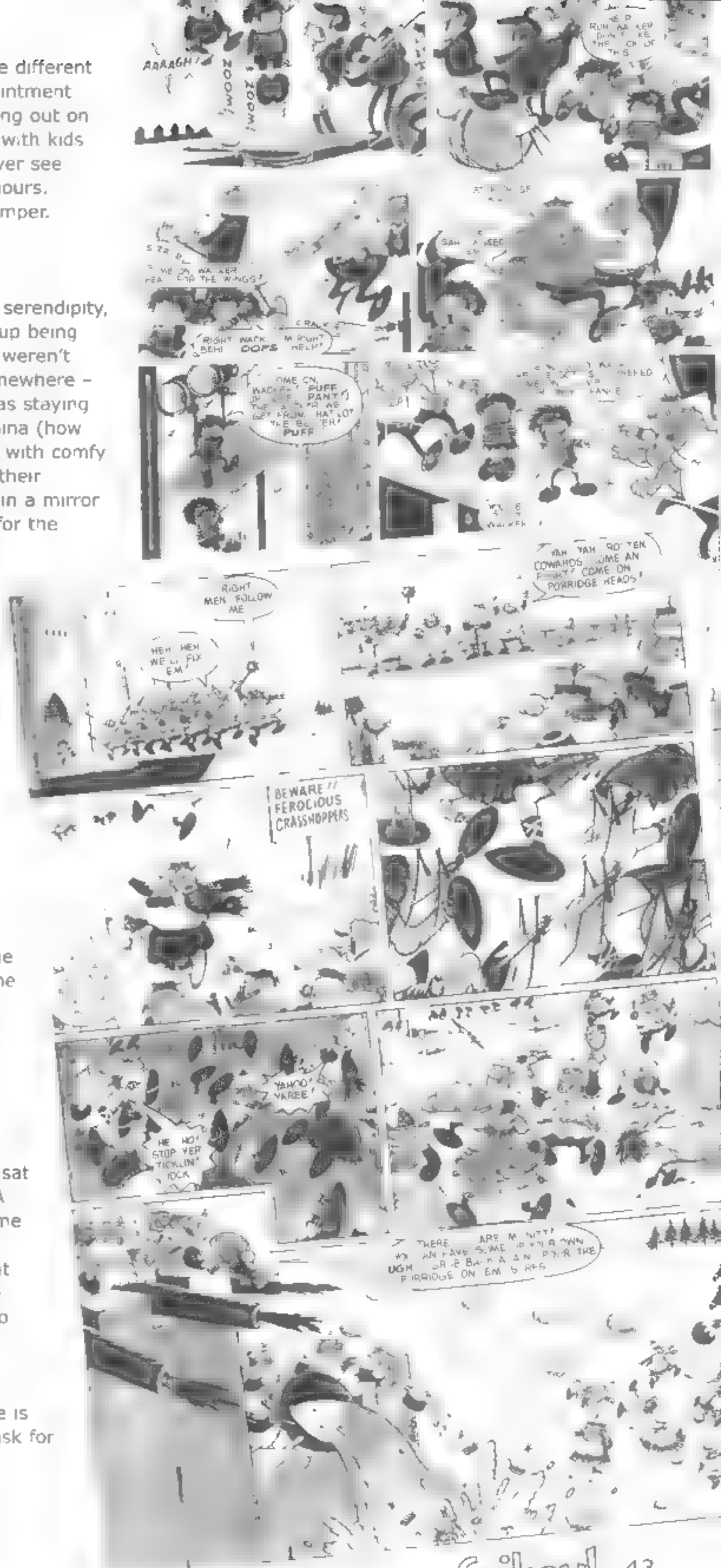
All of them!

I unwrapped my Fry's Five Centres bar and sat on a box by the faraway light from outside. A boy on a box with a stack of annuals and some little chocolate. Lost in a dream.

He's still there somewhere in the ghosts that drift around that room and that time. We are attached to our pasts by gossamer threads so thin they look fragile but so strong that you bought this magazine to retrace them.

Raindrops on the window. A street cleaner brushes by. The night has no neon and there is silence. At no stage did the Devil appear to ask for my signature in blood – he didn't need to.

I had already sold my soul. ■



# Um letters!

*Being a first issue, we have no letters. So we got in touch with a few 'old friends' and asked them to put pen to paper, blanket to fire or just shout very loudly.*

*For future issues of Crikey! let us know what you think about our 'zine, British comics, reactions to features or simply make us laugh.*

*Our address is Crikey! 4 Hillsborough Drive, Unsworth, Bury BL9 8LE.*

*Our electricity communication conduit in the electronic world is Crikeyuk.co.uk*

## **Um Crikey!**

In the 1974 *Sparky Annual* (published 1973) there is a 'Peter's Pipes' story wherein our titular hero blows his pipes to bring the Greek philosopher Aristotle to life. He does this to get the Greek Geek to write him an essay on ancient Greece. His cheating ways were not to work, however, as Aristotle writes the essay in ancient Greek! (Hee, hee.)

Here's the point of my letter. When Aristotle is brought to life, he utters the word eureka (I have found it). But that most famous of statements exploded from the mouth of Archimedes

If you can't trust Peter's Pipes, what can you trust?

*Insecure, Beanotown*

*Do any other readers' have a letter of complaint from books and comics published over a quarter of a century ago? If so, get in touch*



## **Um Crikey!**

You miserable little perishers! You gone and done your flamin' first issue and not had a mention of the war strips that made British comics so good.

My pint sized batman Maggot Malone agrees with me. Or he better 'ad if he knows what's good for 'im!

*Hercules Hurricane (Captain)*

*Thanks, Cap! At the risk of sending you into one of your infamous rages - what do you think of the modern notion of pronouncing your name heh-ra-klees instead of the good old fashioned herk-u-lees? Blistering bulwarks, eh!*

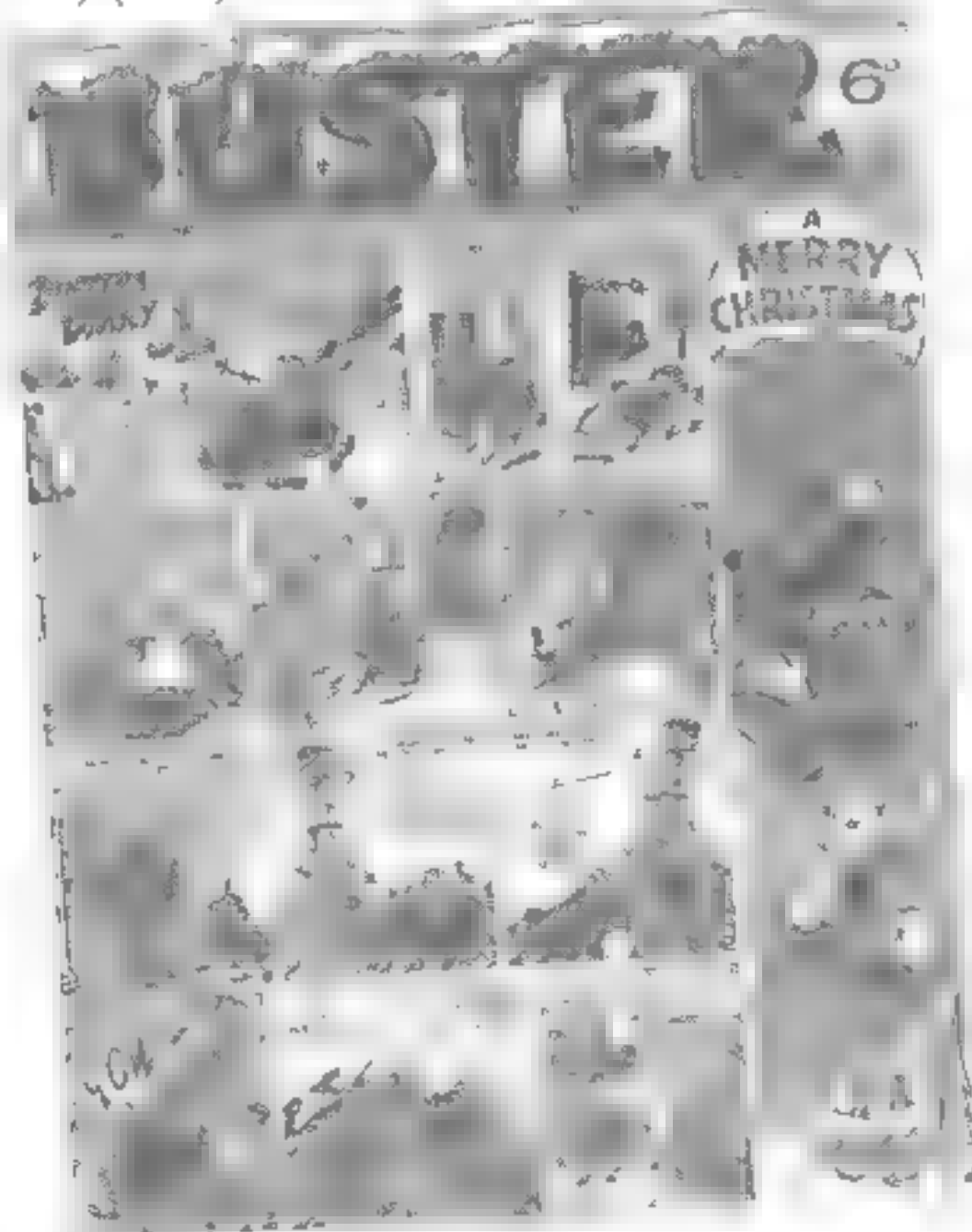
## **Um Crikey! Gentlemen,**

One has been made aware that master Buster, of *Buster* comic renown, was indeed the son of the pleasure-seeking hedonist Mister Capp: he of the socialist working class newspaper the *Daily Mirror*.

I can't for the life of me imagine Mister and Mrs Capp actually producing offspring.

And yet there is the enigma of the flatcap

Confused,  
Snooty (Lord)



*This is a strange question to answer. If one looks at the contemporary newspaper strip Andy Capp it is easy to get the feeling that the strip existed in a time many years before its run ('50s - '90s).*

*'Buster's Diary', the strip in which Buster appeared in *Buster* (are you paying attention at the back), is clearly set in the period of the comic. And as Buster was supposed to be Andy Capp as a lad set in the '60s and the *Daily Mirror's* Andy was also supposed to be set in the (then) '60s, we can only assume some sort of time travel or parallel universe. It's the only possible answer - it you don't count zero editorial attention to continuity. Oh oh! Fanboy alert! Fanboy alert!*

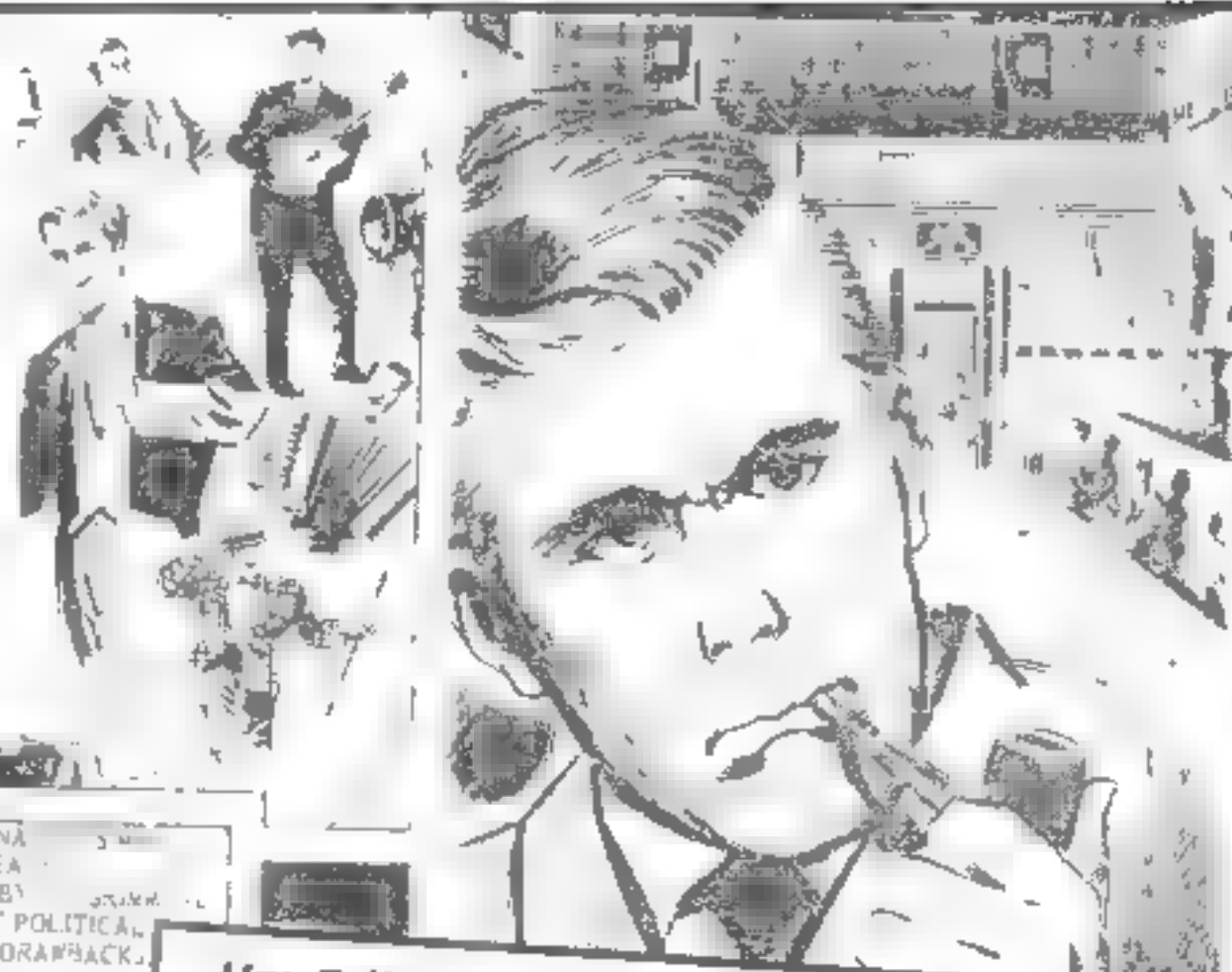
*By the way - we think 'Buster's Diary' was the first strip to use the sound effect FTOOM*

### Um Crikey!

It was the in-thing in the '60s and '70s to have biographical strips telling the rags to riches story of celebrities. I seem to recall an awfully boring strip that told the tale of one-time pop nobody and Harold Wilson sound-alike Mike Yarwood. Am I mad, or did it really happen?

Mytek the Mighty

It happened in the pages of Judy. As far as we know, it only ran for one issue. As it wasn't a serial it meant that no rights were required to tell the story and yet the young girls could still enjoy the thrill-a-panel story of Mike Y's rise to fame.



MIKE'S CLOSE STUDY OF HIS SUBJECT WAS TO PAY OFF WHEN HE IMPERSONATED THE VOICE OF HAROLD WILSON FOR A BOLLING BROTHERS' FILM.

OTHER POLITICAL PERSONA IMITATES ARE EDWARD HEAL, MAC MILLAN, LORD BOOTHBY AND GEORGE BROWN. BUT POLITICAL APRESSIONS HAVE THEIR DRAWBACK.



### Um Crikey!

DC Thomson must have been verry clever to use there komics to sell the Christmas Anuuls. Do you know the 1st time they ever used the komik stories to sell the anuuls????

Dennis Menace 4ever

Thanks Dennis  
Remember even at 50-plus it's never too late to go back to school (Waiter left years ago, so you won't be embarrassed.)

We're not sure when the first attempt was made to use the strips to promote the annuals - as opposed to straightforward ads. We think it was the 10th November issue of Beano way back in 1956

In that issue Biffo the Bear was so engrossed in reading about 'Prince Whoopee', 'Roger the Dodger', 'The Horse That Jack Built', 'Sampson and the Shipwrecked Circus' and 'Bird Boy' that he failed to notice all sorts of comical catastrophes around him.

Funny but effective marketing



### Um Crikey!

Woof-woof! We luv stornes about dogs and them behaving bad. Just for a laff - has there ever been a comic strip about trying to make dogs behave well? Not that you'd catch us doing soppy things like that!

Bash Street Pups

And woof-woof to you, too! Although there were lots of 'How to...' type text features we're not aware of too many comic strips. The most famous (!) would be TV doggie dominator Barbara Woodhouse who appeared in Girl (sister comic to Eagle) in '56 and '57. The strip ran for about a year and was written by Woodhouse and comics stalwart George Bowe

### Um Crikey!

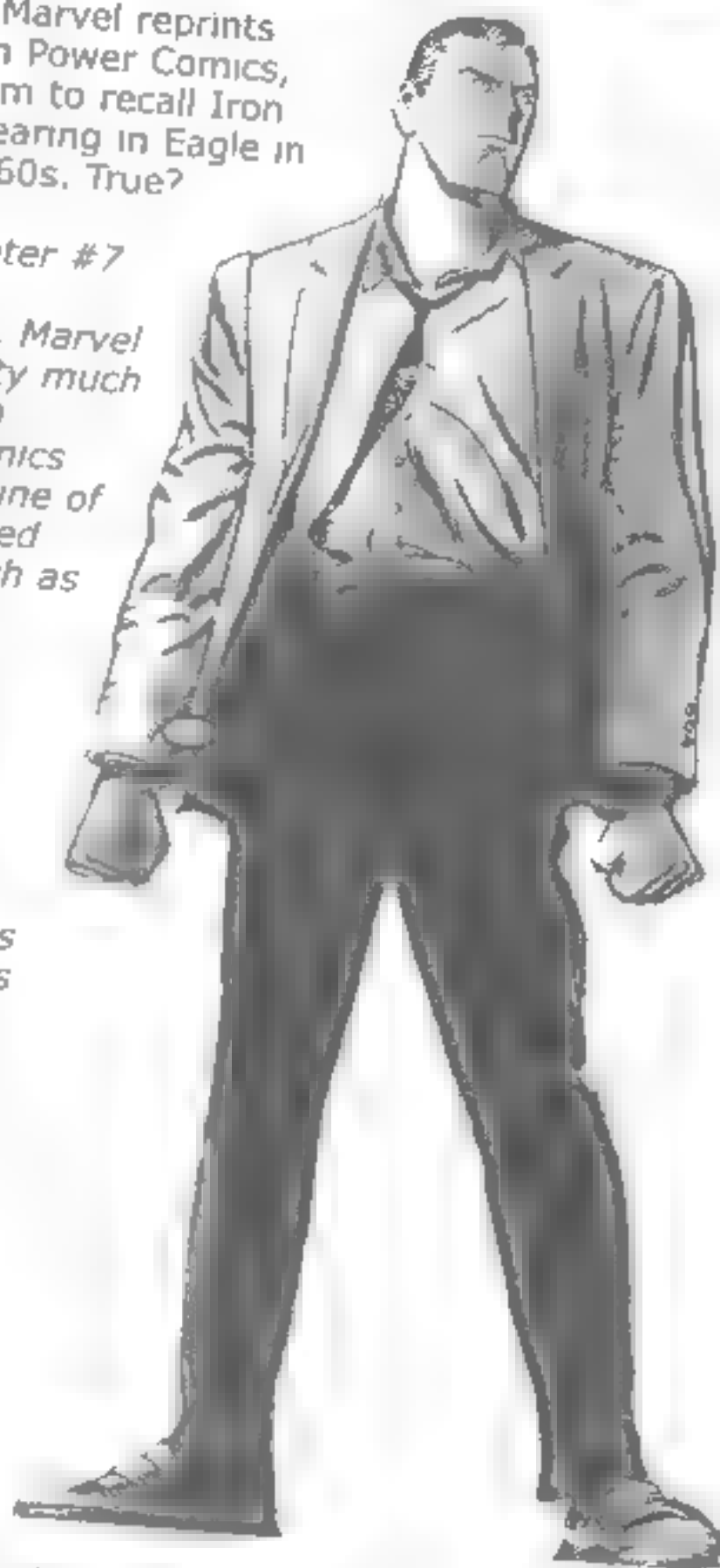
I know Marvel reprints started in Power Comics, but I seem to recall Iron Man appearing in Eagle in the late '60s. True?

Not true?

Metal Eater #7

Not true. Marvel were pretty much married to Power Comics and their line of action-based comics such as Fantastic, Smash, Terrific and Pow. The deal was semi-exclusive (i.e. not exclusive) as reprint strips still ran in Alan Class comics such as Astounding Tales, Creepy Worlds and Sinister Tales.

An Iron Man did appear in Eagle but he/it was a wholly British creation featuring a secret agent robot in human form called, well, yes - Iron Man. This appeared in the late '60s just as similar-sounding Tower Comics were on the racks. One of their leading characters was the super spy Dynamo. Back in the Eagle, Iron Man was busy battling against an arched evil villain by the name of Dynamo Tower. Power Iron Man - Iron Man Dynamo Dynamo Spooky eh?



That's it for this issue. If you want your thoughts rants or humorous insights included in a future Crikey get in touch soon. Contact things are at the top of the section

# Jackie Who?

By Helen D Bennett

It is a commonly known fact that a fourteen-year-old girl with facial spots and an emerging figure is in search of a steady boyfriend. It would naturally follow that a big sister should be on hand to help steer her through this emotional journey. If, however, she didn't have a sister to confide in, there was *Jackie*.

*Jackie* magazine was hailed as the young girl's 'Bible' and her dependable 'big sister'. But what did you do if, like me, you had neither? Well, you just got on with it. The Bible is a fascinating read and packed with sound advice and I would have adored a big sister, in theory.

As for *Jackie*, I didn't need that seemingly bouncy, precocious, go ahead girl who was preoccupied with her boyfriend and wore a 'cardi' with patch pockets she had sewn on herself, telling me how to do it.

Even if she was right. One look at the cover in its early days could tell me that. Who in their right mind could even stand like *Jackie*, pictured next to the title, except perhaps Una Stubbs dancing in the film *Summer Holiday*!

Try it; it's hard

## Jackie Free

Is there another girl like me, who never bought, owned or read a copy of *Jackie*? I noted that it was very popular amongst friends at school. It was avidly discussed during break-time, mainly for two reasons - the letters page and its pop star content.

Both made me squirm.

The role models I had adopted were *Thunderbirds*' Lady Penelope, Blyton's Darrell Rivers at Malory Towers, Austin's Elizabeth Bennett (no relation!) and Bronte's Jane Eyre. They would never have had their problems to an agony aunt or hung posters of pop stars on their

bedroom wall. They were all too well grounded, too sensible and getting on with their lives for such frivolities. *Debut Etiquette* and *Modern Manners* might have been a more suitable equivalent 'Bible' for them.

It became apparent that many girls had a different attitude to me.

## Cathy and Claire

Jackies' confidantes, Cathy and Claire counselled and consoled a weekly stream of troubled teenage girls in the main. They delivered comforting but conservative, establishment wisdom, believing most often that parents were in the right.

Now this is where I thought I was particularly smart; I cut out the middlewoman and went straight to my mother.

## CAN THIS BE LOVE?

"What would you think if Glenn and I got engaged?" I asked casually one evening, while we prepared dinner together. I was sixteen and I knew the answer. Without a pause, "How ridiculous!" was sharply fired back. In a dozen words my dilemma was resolved and buried without trace. It saved so much time. Instant advice with no need to write a letter exposing my private life and providing entertainment for the world.

How could Cathy and Claire possibly compete with that? But then I was lucky to have someone to trust and I knew the boundaries of my small world well enough. Letters to *Jackie* showed that not every one did.



We can't promise the perfect solution, but we'll do our best. If you're stuck with a problem and you can't see the way out, write to us at this address: Cathy & Claire, Jackie, 185 Fleet Street, London EC4A 2HS.



# Jackie

**FREE  
HEART  
RING**

**SUPER FULL COLOUR  
PIN-UPS OF CLIFF  
ELVIS, BILLY FURY  
and The BEATLES**

**PERFUME TIPS FOR A  
MORE KISSABLE YOU**

**DREAMY PICTURE**



**MY VERY OWN  
NANNY OSMON**

I KNOW I'VE GOT  
TO CHASE HIM WITH MILLIONS OF  
THE DOLLARS EVERY TIME HE  
SINGS TO AS IT WAS  
FOR ME OF HIS LOVELY  
I WISH I COULD MEET HIM  
ON F



## Pin-up Popsters

I recently came across a photograph of David Cassidy taken some time during the early seventies. The cheesy smile, awkward stance and thrust of his pelvis that said "look at me" was probably requested by the photographer and it made me feel embarrassed for him.

The whole experience prompted that strange *deja vu* sensation. I suddenly pictured a scene from 1973. It was the wardrobe door of a school friend, Jane, on which hung this same image. I now learn that Jackie had carried David's three-part, dismembered body as a centre fold, which had been lovingly reconstructed over as many weeks by Jane.

I felt embarrassed for her too. I could only imagine that this apparent act of misguided infatuation over one so smug was caused by a lack of male company, partly due to her only having sisters and compounded by attending an all-girls school. I, on the other hand, would never submit to such obvious girlish behaviour, opting to avoid any unnecessary teasing from my brothers and their friends. Far better to keep one's own infatuations under wraps and for boys I actually knew. Role models were not always that helpful. Nor was *Debrets*.

## Classy Friend

After thirty-five years I find that Jackie had an influential role in our young lives but I will never know quite how much. Her ideas and advice will have filtered down undetected through her readers to the non-readers. You just couldn't avoid Jackie.

- She was in your class at school.
- She went to your youth club.
- She shopped in the same town
- She talked and was talked about.

I prefer to think of her not as a big sister but as a friend. She is the sort of childhood friend I am so pleased to meet by chance where we promise to call to



# Lady Penelope



catch up properly but never quite make it.

Jackie has provided the loyal reader with the perfect grounding for a lifetime of women's magazine reading, and that is probably why it is something, like the chance meeting of an old friend. Never anticipated but relished all the same and leaving with the promise of return.

## Osmosis

When I look back at Jackie magazines now I am surprised at how I did know something of what lay between its covers and have absorbed through some process of pop osmosis.

I was doing all the things Jackie advocated; talking to my parents and understanding that they wanted the best for me, coming home on time, taking a sensible approach with boys, showing a keen interest in popular culture, designing and making my own sometimes quirky clothes.

Oh no! Was I Jackie?

We probably all were!



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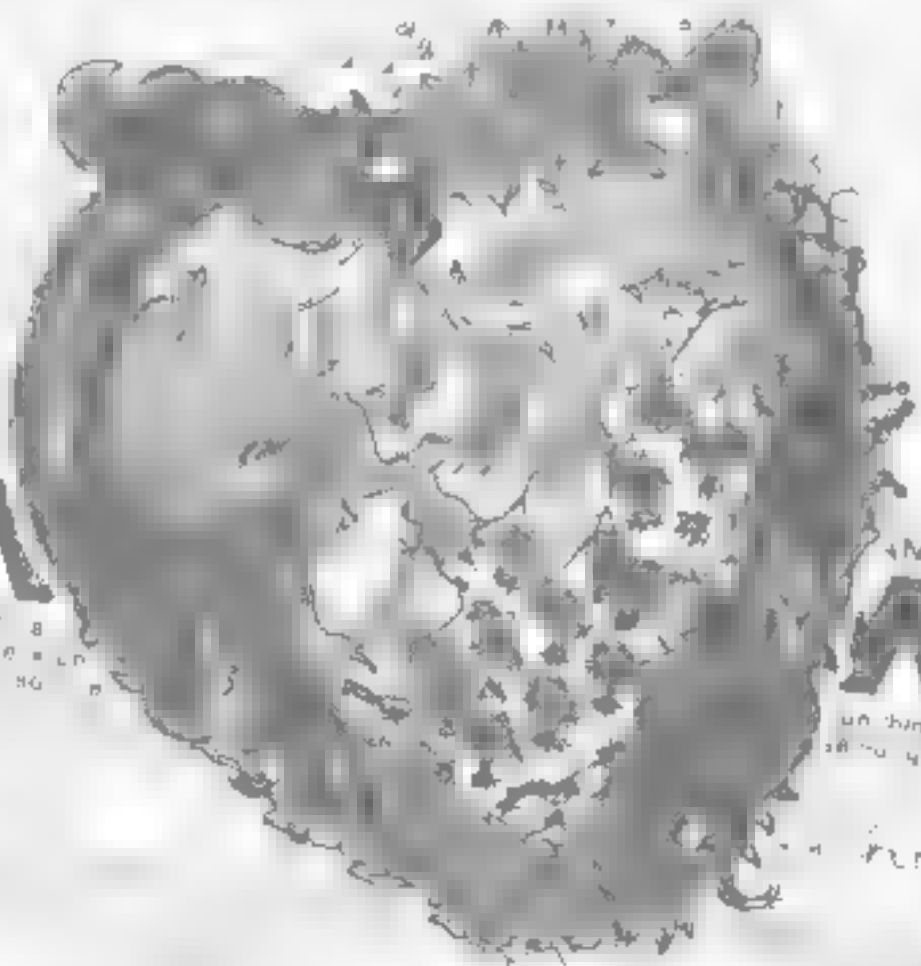
**ERI**

## MEET THE DISHY DUSTMAN!

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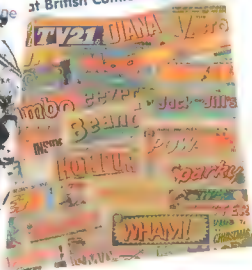
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# Editorial

**Brian M Clarke**  
Editor

**Glenn B Fleming**  
Designer

**Tom Sweetman**  
Publicist

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Glenn B Fleming explains why, for him, Frank Bellamy will always be his real-life comic hero.

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Tom Sweetman remembers a night of comic annuals, too many toffees and selling his soul.

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Some old friends have a few words to say

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Helen D Bennett recalls the delights of the comic she never read.

Well, here it is - the first issue of our homage to the excesses and successes of British comics. For a long time UK comics were largely ignored by fans but a look on the bookshelves suggests that all that is changing. Recent months has seen an explosion of books talking about or reprinting British comics and several great websites have sprung up to discuss and celebrate our comic heritage (take a bow 26pigs and britishcomics.com).

It seems that everyone is starting to talk about British comics. I look in jeweller's windows such as H R Samuel's and see tiny statues of the Beano characters. Lledo's Days Gone toy car collection features vans with Wham!, TV Comic, Hornet, Rover and other titles on the sides. Getting back to books we have had Titan's hardback reprints of 'Steel Claw', 'Charley's War' and 'Spider' with more on the way. Even the American publishers are getting into the act. The comic book Albion (now collected in a trade paperback) featured a story arc with literally dozens of old British characters involved in a suitably weird tale of madness and mayhem. And just wait 'til you see what they did to Bad Penny! And of course there are the on-going reprints of 'Dan Dare' and newspaper strips such as 'James Bond' and 'Modesty Blaise'.

So it didn't take a genius to work out that there was a lot of passion and nostalgia out there for British comics. We love comics. You love comics. The rest was easy.

**Brian M Clarke**  
Editor

#### **Writers this issue:**

Helen D Bennett  
David Britton  
Brian M Clarke  
Glenn B Fleming  
Bob Norton  
Tom Sweetman  
Special thanks to Mike 'Rubber Chicken'  
Kazybrid for the amazing cover artwork.

#### **Advertising rates:**

Back cover in colour £250. Inside covers in colour £150. Full page b/w £75.. Half page b/w £45. Quarter page b/w £30. Eighth of a page b/w one million pounds.

**Note:** The closing date for booking ads for issue two is 31 August 2007.

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# Nutty Notions

by Brian M Clarke

Each issue of Crikey! will feature a selection of some of the loving, bizarre concepts that have graced the pages of British comics in years past. To start us off we have an extra long bonus section that covers all genres, ages and periods. Ideas and nominations for future NNs gratefully accepted. Enjoy!



## KING BERNARD (The Hornet)

Inspired by the film *Passport to Pimlico* (in which a London borough gains independence from England). This sports strip featured "Scrapland, the independent country set up by Bernard Briggs and his

friend Alf Tupper, the famous runner". The political satire of the film was sensibly dropped in favour of sporting drama as the tiny state put forward its team for the European Amateur Nations Cup. Scraplanders were naturally pleased to count not only Alf Tupper amongst their population but also Adele Boyle, also known as Booming Ada, "scrapland's one-girl team"



## FISHBOY DENIZEN OF THE DEEP (Buster)

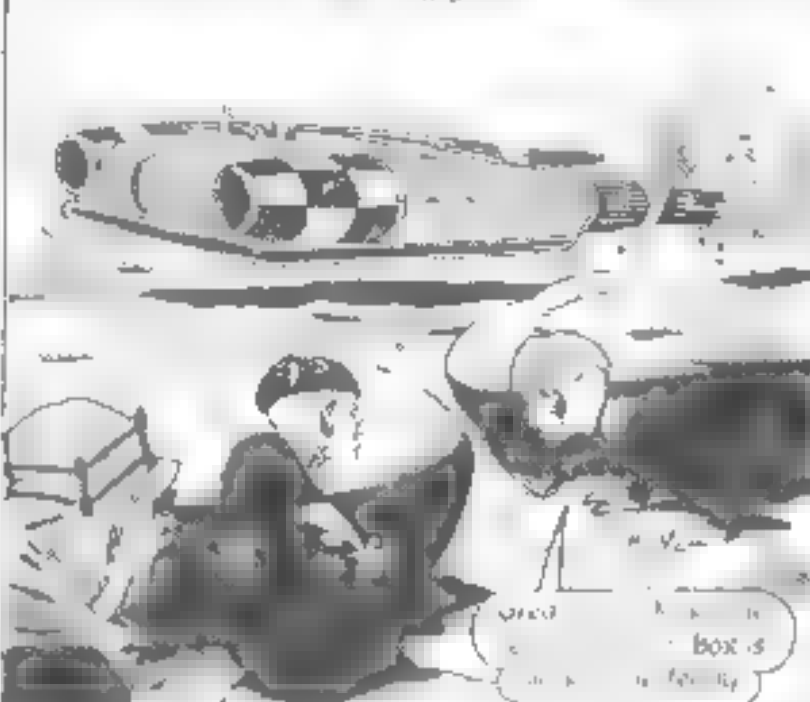
You know you're in good hands when your comic uses a word like denizen. You can almost hear the writer desperately flicking through the dictionary looking for something to go with the word deep. Fishboy the strip makes you realise that

Robinson Crusoe just wasn't hard enough when he was cast away on his lump of rock. "Stranded on a desert is and as a child and forced to get his food from the sea, Fishboy developed slightly webbed hands and feet and learned to breathe underwater as easily as a fish." Never mind all that

## THE WHIZZERS FROM OZZ (Topper)

If my geography lessons involved travelling in a souped up space car to an alien world to collect "various articles which the twins had to take back to (planet) Ozz as part of a space geography project", then perhaps I would have paid more attention! The Whizzers, like most strips in British comics, started out as a pun (oh, how we laughed) but unlike many managed to leave that quickly behind and develop itself into a tightly written quality adventure strip. The spaced out twins were called Kirk and Krak. Their earthling friend, who you just knew wore a snake belt to hold up his rebellious black jeans, was called Willie Walker.

"Here goes!" giggled Kirk as he stashed down one of the buttons on the side of the box. The space car rose in the air.



ded from the tiny remote-control unit, the flying machine swooped low over the rebel rite men. At the right moment, Kirk special control switch and a greyish-coloured gas began to pour out of the space-car's breathing gas.



millions of years of evolution stuff, if an English schoolboy wants something bad enough, he'll just get it.

Of course, seeing as he kept his ability to use his lungs and live on land he was actually Amphibian Boy but that's not nearly as catchy

### STEEL COMMANDO (Thunder)

"During World War II, Lance Corporal Ernie 'Excused-boots' Bates, the laziest man in the army, was put in charge of a secret weapon known as the Steel



Commando, because Ernie was the only man from whom the robot would take orders." Steel Commando was an eccentric combination of Captain Hurricane and Brassneck – but without the Captain's famous bad temper. Invariably Ernie would find his meta-mate running short of oil somewhere in their adventure or in danger of

rusting up. Makes you wonder what happened to a 1 that wonderful technology, doesn't it

### DUSTY DAN (The Hotspur)

Here's a strange confluence of fate. Not only was a *Hotspur* writer desperate for a new concept – but when it landed on the editor's desk, he was so distressed that he accepted it! Dusty Dan was the adventures of "a young Townport dustman" with his handcart boldly



### SPACE GRANNY (Mandy)

Sometimes a comic strip can have a whole subtext that goes completely unnoticed. Not Space Granny. She was literally a spaced out pil' popping h'pster-speaking beatnik from Out There. Our earthbound heroine, Rona Gray, "was contentedly enjoying a happy childhood when her life was completely changed by the arrival of Vanusa, a strange, swinging visitor straight from planet Vanus". The leather-skirt, French cap-wearing alien "claimed to be Rona's granny, and tried to lure her back to Vanus by making her try some of the powers all Vanusians possessed." So every week drug-pushing Space Granny would give her 'niece' a special 'pili' to try. It wasn't only SG who had amazing trips.



emblazoned with DAN AND HIS VAN! What worked, however, was the opposition of Dan's mundane world and the *outré* characters encountered on his rounds. Like the time he met Chinese magician Wo Fu who gave Dan's boss Mr. Beaky twenty pairs of hands! And did I mention the magic dustbin lid?

### BIRDMAN FROM BARATOGA (Smash)

It's a good job they added the bit about Baratoga – it's so easy to get these Birdmen mixed up (anyone remember Birdman from *The Mighty Heroes*?)

"Captain Don Sater and his friend Birdman – the youngster who had been brought up by birds on the South Sea Islands of Baratoga" was the set up. Unlike Fishboy, Birdman hadn't found a way to super-evolve into his adopted species. Instead he had a





special cloak made out of bird feathers that allowed him to soar like a flying squirrel from the tops of trees, clifftops and out of sabotaged planes. He also had the Bob Dole habit of referring to himself in the third person, "Never has Birdman seen anything like this".

### CHAIRMAN CHERRY (Princess Tina & Penelope)

Read a couple of girls' comics and you soon discover that the stories weren't always about wannabe dancers, nders and nurses - with a good dollop of orphans, the d sinherited and vets thrown in. Spies, superheroines and time travelling adventuresses were also in abundance.

And of course exciting stories about the world of B g Business Take Chairman Cherry for instance No this wasn't about a g r y leader of Red China Instead "... when the president of the great firm of Hartlands died, he left everything to office-cleaner Cherry Chick. Now Cherry is CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD" It wasn't a adventures with business plans, monthly budget projections and management accounts, however As you can guess from the company name, romance wasn't to be too far from young Cherry's mind



And just for the record, Cherry Chick was no relation to that other Cherry businesswoman, Cherry La ng who ran a mobile chip shop in 'Cherry's Chipper' in *Judy* comic.

### MY PAL ROPEY (*The Beezer*)

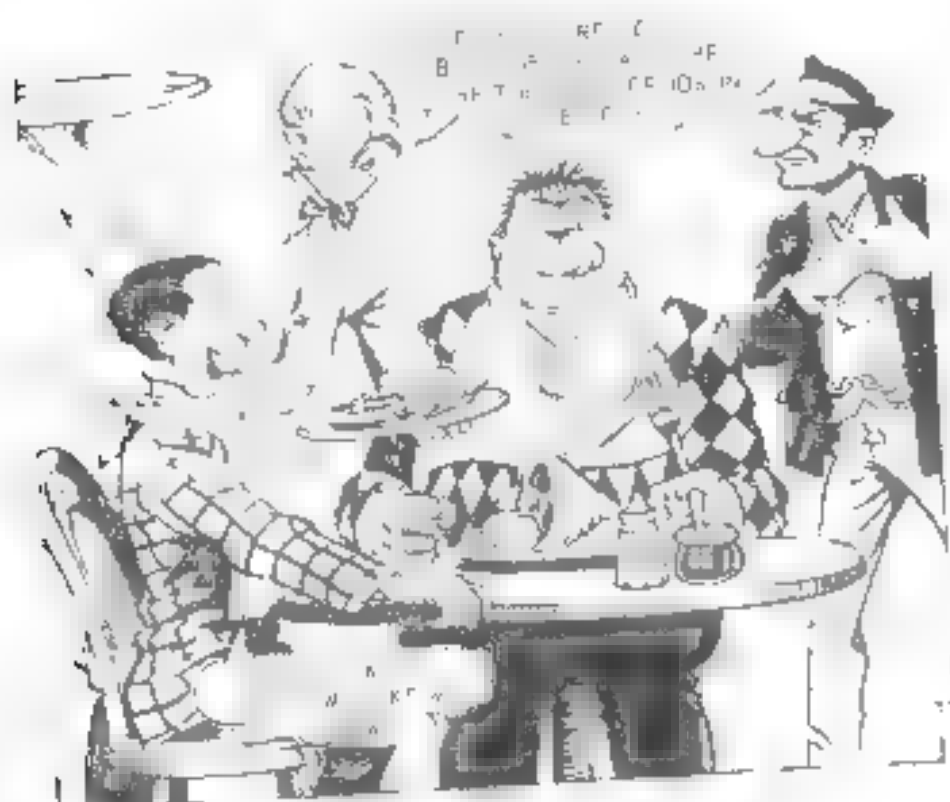
British comics have a long tradition of kids having secret pals. Kids, it seems, attract the strangest friends. And some of these pals are stranger than others. Take Ron Rodgers' aptly named ropey friend who was, literally, a bit of old rope. Blonde schoolboy Ron was the owner of an amazing bit of Indian faker's rope" that



does everything he told it to do." And as Ron explains, "so he's a mighty useful pal to have." Ropey never spoke - comics weren't that crazy - but he did come into some pretty expressive shapes to let you know what was on his mind. Come to think of it, comics were that crazy!

### CECIL THE STONE AGE SCRAPPER (*The Victor*)

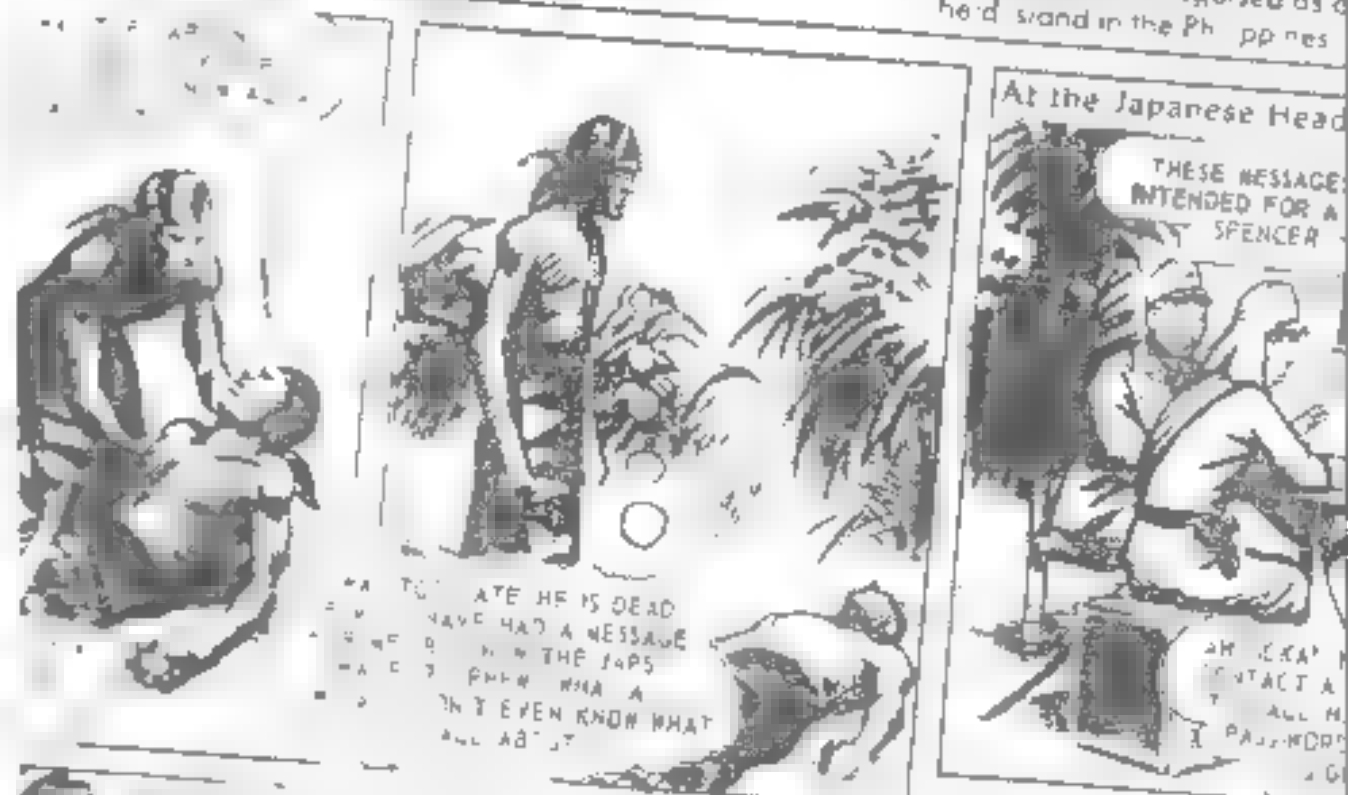
Imagine you found a perfectly preserved 'stone-age caveman' frozen in ice. You accidentally crack the ice and amazingly, the old geezer wakes up. What do you do? Contact the anthropology department at your local Uni? Get in touch with the papers or TV to sell the story of the Incredible Iceman? Find a way to slowly introduce our ancient ancestor to the modern world? Well if your name is Pete Pringle and you're a boxing manager the answer is none of the above. You call him Cecil and set him on the road to becoming heavyweight champion of the world.



# THE LIMPING



**D**URING the Second World War, Spencer, better known as The Limping Man, because his favourite disguise was that of a cripple. Spencer disguised as a cripple and he'd stand in the Philippines.



At the Japanese Headquarters

THESE MESSAGES WERE INTENDED FOR A SPENCER



THE PASSWORD IS 'WELAP RE' THE COLLECTOR. THIS IS A WAY WHEN YOU HAVE MADE CONTACT. ALL COMMUNICATE WITH PRIVATE LAL FA.



### THE LIMPING MAN (*The Hornet*)

"During the Second World War, one of Britain's finest agents was Captain Spencer, better known as The Limping Man, because his favourite disguise was that of a cripple." Need I say more?!

# Fiendishly Interesting



## **A Terrifying Tale of the British Horror Comic By Bob Norton**

*Why do I find the black and white horror comics available here in the late '40s and early '50s so fascinating? They're gruesome, sexy, clever and damn difficult to find! They represent the 'unacceptable face' of comics both here and in the States! Yet, although they shared the same fate in both countries – banishment – their demise was politically light years away in the UK from the Fredric Wertham inspired American campaign!!*

*The story of the American horror campaign has been well covered before in many books<sup>1</sup>. The British experience, however, has a less well-known and poorly understood history. It is this British horror campaign and the comics involved that forms the basis of this article.*

### **The Comic Business in 1940/50's Britain**

The TV series *The Long Firm*<sup>2</sup> showed the seedy side of '50s London life in the music business and the growth of 'soft-porn' magazines. British comics too, had their murky side and horror comics were at the forefront.

Before the Second World War American horror comics reached this country sporadically with unsold 'remainders' bought in bulk and sold in chain stores or

market stalls. Some came in as packing material for other imports (which is why 'pence' stamped US comics from this period are often water-stained). Their circulation was not large, but even in 1939 George Orwell in his essay on boys' weeklies drew attention to their 'undesirable features'.

During the war American servicemen stationed over here were able to buy the comics through their canteens and Post Exchange (PX) stores while others were imported by American servicemen gathering in Britain for the D-Day landings. When they had finished them they often passed them onto local British families whose children welcomed them with open arms! After the war American publishers wanted to exploit this new market but because of import restrictions it was left to 'pirate' British publishers to spring up and take advantage of the demand from British kids by buying the rights to the US comics for £60 to £150 per issue, very little capital outlay and, therefore, well worth the risk!

Reputable UK newsagents never liked handling the more objectionable horror comics. They wanted comics that Mummy would like, (such as those produced by Hulton Press<sup>3</sup> from 1950 onwards – *Eagle*, *Girl*, *Robin*, and *Swift*) so most of the 'worst' comics were sold by the owners of little sweet shops and general stores in the back streets of our towns and cities as well as by street hawkers who sold them outside schools.

### **The 1950s British 'Horror Campaign'**

Both the US and UK horror comics, especially the EC



Reading American comics in the '50s could be a serious matter.

originals and British reprints, contained cleverly constructed stories, often with a twist at the end, and with beautiful artwork by artists like Johnny Craig, Will Elder, Jack Davis and Graham Inges. However, they also contained a large amount of gore (dismembered limbs, rotting corpses, and so on) which, although always integral to the plot and tongue in cheek, was typically presented in a fairly explicit manner. I suppose it was inevitable, therefore, that in a country where a comic was associated with good, clean fun, these comics would go down like a lead balloon with adults (kids loved 'em though!).

This adult opposition led to a campaign to have horror comics taken off the streets but the forces that brought this about in Britain were very different from those in the US. In America it was largely based on Fredric Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent*, whereas in the UK 'Seduction' was only published on 23 February 1955 by Museum Press, the day after the introduction of the Act that put paid to these comics over here.

### Read Scare

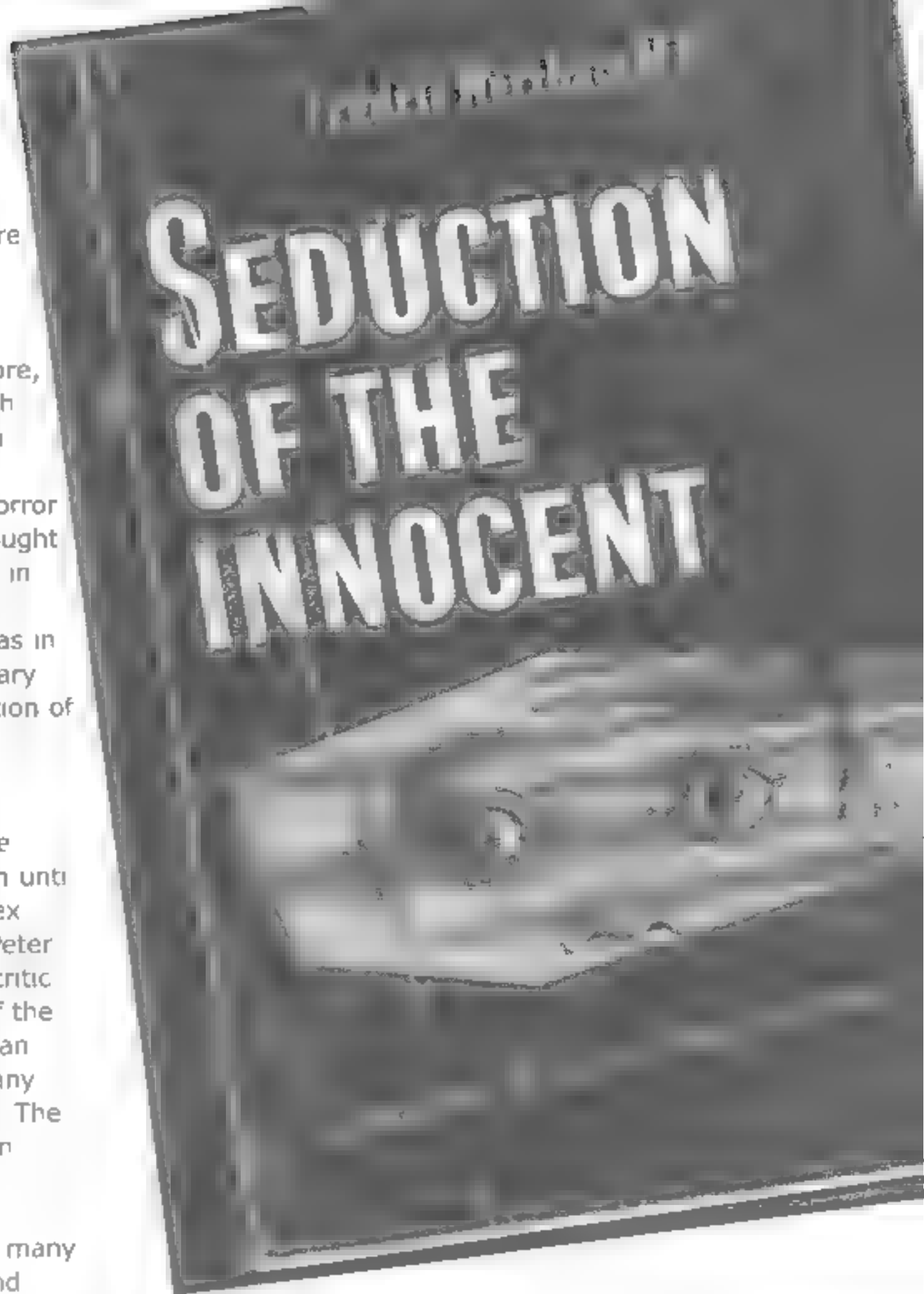
The roots of the British campaign date back to the immediate post war years but did not gather steam until 1952. George Pumphrey<sup>5</sup>, a headmaster at a Sussex junior school was an early and vocal campaigner. Peter Mauger, a history teacher was another outspoken critic of the 'American comics'. Mauger was a member of the British Communist Party (BCP) which was running an anti-American campaign under the agenda that many aspects of British culture were being Americanised. The BCP condemned all American culture and Mauger in particular condemned American comics.

The involvement of the BCP goes some way to explaining why the thrust of the campaign was for many years against 'American comics'. As newspapers and other independent groups such as the NUT<sup>6</sup> became more involved, the whole campaign became narrower in its attack and was then aimed almost solely at horror and crime comics and the headline switched from 'American' to 'horror'.

Contrast the situation here with the US campaign where Wertham's book was pivotal. The Government shared his personal views but it was arguable that they had fears of their own brought about by the statistics highlighted in their research reports. The rapid boom in US horror comics and, in particular adults reading them, was alarming from a political point of view. Many comics in the EC line had forthright political themes and were sometimes anti McCarthyite (Senator McCarthy was the man who led the witch-hunt against so-called 'Communist sympathisers' in a series of Senate hearings in the early 1950s).

So the UK and US campaigns were totally different in nature, indeed, at odds with one another in political terms. Alas the results were the same – the comics were banned!

In late 1954 the situation in Britain made it impossible for action not to be taken: the Home Secretary, Major Lloyd-George had received a draft proposal from the



Comics Campaign Council and the NUT had whipped up the House of Commons. The result was the publication of the *Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Bill* on 11 February 1955 which eventually became law as the 1955 Act of the same name.

### UK Horror Comics and Publishers

In the US, the comics in the frontline of their campaign were the EC threesome of *The Vault of Horror*, *The Crypt of Terror* and *The Haunt of Fear*. Other minor US publishers such as Story Inc. who published comics such as *Mysterious Adventures*, were also involved but these fell far short of Will Gaines's high standards at EC and tended to trade humour for nastiness.

In Britain, different comics were involved in the campaign, although some shared the same names as their US counterparts. The most famous of the comics featured in the British campaign were the horror comics produced by EC comics in the US and reprinted by the Arnold Book Co. (such as *Tales from The Crypt* and *The Haunt of Fear*. Although aimed primarily at these British black and white editions of US comics, the campaign was also aimed at original British comics (such as *Bat Magazine* No. 2 published by Cartoon Art in Glasgow), and, to a lesser extent, original US titles which were thin

The British titles listed below (which played a key role in the campaign), were mentioned in newspapers, various speeches, magazine articles, an NUT filmstrip and various House of Commons Reports. They are taken mainly from those listed in the bibliography in Martin Barker's book *Haunt of Fears*<sup>8</sup> but I have extended the list to cover not only the comics but also other comics which, I feel, fall within the remit of a full collection.

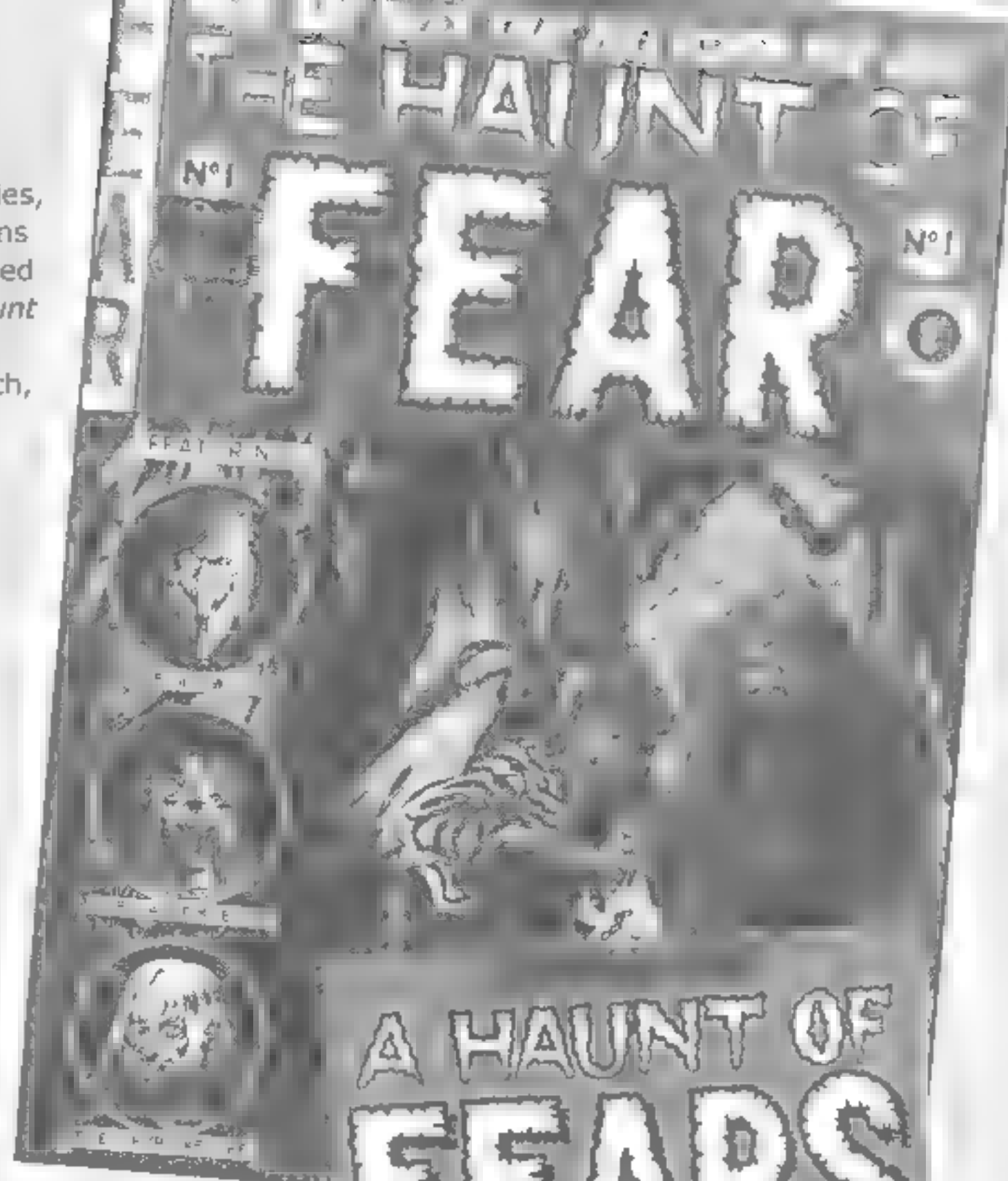
Bat Magazine #1-3 (Cartoon Art)  
 Battie Action #5 (Atlas)  
 Black Magic #1-16 (Arnold)  
 Black Magic Album #1 (Arnold)  
 Crime Detective #1 (Streamline),  
 Crime Exposed #10 (Marvel)  
 Crimes by Women #1 (Fox)  
 CrimeSuspenseStories #20 (EC)  
 Down With Crime #1-6 (Miler)  
 Eerie #1 & 2 (Thorpe & Porter)  
 Ghostly Weird Stories #1 (Arnold)  
 Guns of Fact & Fiction #1 (Streamline)  
 Haunt of Fear #1 (Arnold)  
 Manhunt #1-4 (Streamline)  
 Monster of Frankenstein #1-5 (Arnold)  
 Planet Comics #1-5 (Locker)  
 Spei bound #1 (Cartoon Art)  
 Starting Terror Tales #1 (Arnold)  
 Tales from The Crypt #1 & 2 (Arnold)  
 True Crime #2 (Magazine Village)  
 True Poice #1 (Cartoon Art)  
 Vault of Horror #1 (Arnold)  
 Voodoo #1 (Harvey)  
 Women Outlaws #7 (Fox)

**Scarcity:** surely comic collecting has to have high peaks to scale! – modern comics are firmly stuck in the lowlands in terms of availability - even 1960s American comics are relatively easy to find in this country now! But a multi-millionaire couldn't buy a full set of British 1950s Horror comics 'off the peg' as some of these comics are seriously scarce! Indeed some are truly rare, even Martin Barker couldn't locate copies of them all for his book and Vault of Horror #1 (Arnold) might not even exist at all as it was probably pulped prior to publication to avoid further trouble after an MP waved it in the Commons during a debate on horror comics!

**Prices:** difficult! The simple rule is if you see one for sale buy it! My experience is that comics can be picked up for as little as £1, or up to £30 for a single comic. Vault of Horror might fetch £500 if one were found! Will they appreciate in value? I'd say definitely! Although there is a much smaller fan base (hopefully larger after this article!) all the key elements are present: scarcity, great artwork, inventive stories and definitely NOT politically correct

**Related Collectables:** there is a long list – from magazines like Picture Post; 9 two issues of which printed articles about horror comics, the NUT filmstrip, *Seduction of the Innocent*, Barker's book, Pumphrey's works and the Clarke and Higgs cover book<sup>10</sup>.

Happy hunting! ■



## The main British 'pirate' publishers were:

i) The Arnold Book Company who published some of the most notorious of the comics in the British campaign as can be seen from the alphabetical list of comics on the facing page.

Arnold were connected to Thorpe & Porter and were probably a covert subsidiary set up to keep T&P away from bad publicity

ii) L. Miller - passing of the 1955 Act led to ruination for publishers in Britain such as Miller, who unlike EC in the US, did not have second successful second string comics such as *Mad* to fall back on.

The only known case under the 1955 Act was against L. Miller & Co., the firm was found guilty and fined £250. Forrie Miller, the elderly wife of the late Len Miller, put the company into voluntary liquidation in the wake of the trial.

iii) Thorpe & Porter - publishers of the British titles 'Eerie' and 'Weird'.

iv) Cartoon Art - an interesting Scottish publisher whose comic *The Bat* ran to three issues and was, I think, the best original British horror comic of the '50s



## Notes and references

1. Tales from the Crypt - Digby Diehl published by St. Martin's Press 1996 gives a good account of the US horror campaign.
2. The Long Firm by Jake Arnott was originally a book before being adapted for BBC2.
3. Hulton Press were among other mainstream publishers (such as Gilberton & Co. who published *Classics Illustrated*) to escape censure
4. *Seduction of the Innocent* by Fredric Wertham - this book was the main early driver of the US campaign.
5. George Pumphrey published many books related to the campaign eg. 'Children's Comics' in 1955.
6. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) issued a filmstrip in 1954 which featured several of the comics listed in this article.
7. This info comes from the book *Gothic Horror* in an excellent article by Steve Holland on p.277 entitled 'On Horror and Censorship'.
8. Martin Barker's book *Haunt of Fears* was published by Pluto Press in 1984.
9. *Picture Post* - the two articles on horror comics were in the 17 May 1952 and 20 November 1954 issues.
10. Phil Clarke and Mike Higgs's great book *Nostalgia About Comics* (Pegasus 1991) contains all three *Bat* comics as well as many others from the early '50s.

on the ground due to import restrictions (such as *CrimeSuspenseStories* No. 20).

## Simply The Best

Like all good things these comics had to end but what a fertile field they've left for collectors! Modern comics, underpinned as they are by big business, have arguably lost the 'edge' that even 1960s comics had! But 1950s British horror/crime comics on the other hand are peerless

I'm not going into the morality of these comics, which I personally don't think should have been banned, but it was the first pop culture issue to affect British children after WWII. This has been seen again and again since the '50s with horror videos and more recently 'violent' computer games - but horror/crime comics were there first and as such have a key place in the social history of post-war Britain and, more importantly to me, they're the best British comics both to collect and read! ■

# My Comicy Saturday

by Brian M Clarke



*This space is intended to be a regular feature in which contributors reminisce about their halcyon childhood days of reading comics. The title is, of course, a bit of a swizz because most of us will write about many other days besides Saturday. I just thought My Comicy Saturday had a nice ring to it. So although Saturday was the Big Comic Day, writers can summon forth memories from any day of the week. If you want to join in the fun and reveal the origins of your addiction, get in touch. The more the loonier!*

I had so many different types of comicy Saturday mornings, depending on what age I was. Shutting my eyes now and thinking back, I get dozens of impressions from my days in short pants, dashing to the paper shop and back to my bedroom to read the latest installment of an adventure serial or just to have a laugh with my (fictional) mates.

I was born in 1954 and my earliest memories of actually getting comics at all go right back to about 1959. I was living in Ireland, just outside Dublin, and I get partial flashes from that time of all kinds of memories including falling inside a cement mixer, releasing chickens from a neighbour's chicken coop and admiring giant sunflowers outside my grandparents house. And mixed in with equal value to these and other memories is going to the shop with my mum on one particular day and seeing what I presume was my first comic spinner/rack. (I also saw a cow in a field that day, so all round, it was a pretty big day for me.)

My mum, being the type who wanted to encourage reading, had probably bought me lots of comics before this particular day but whatever they were, they made little impact on my comicy development. The shop was huge, as was everywhere when you are four going on five. I must have looked through the rack and picked out something that appealed to me at the time because I have a clear memory of lying on the parlour floor, the sun streaming in through the garden window, devouring a copy of Harvey Comics *Casper the Friendly Ghost*. The off-kilter world of ghosts and haunted woods, which should have been scary, was actually a fun place with Casper obviously enjoying himself. (I certainly never noticed that he was a dead kid.)

**Space-age madness with Leo Baxendale's re-working of his *Bash Street* strip. The Tiddlers in their never-ending quest to get one over on Sir.**

As I say, it was unlikely to have been my actual first comic but for some reason it's the first one I can truly remember reading and I have a feeling I know why. Unlike nearly all the weekly comics I was exposed to, Casper was in full colour and in the compact American format. Two physical traits that impacted greatly on my formative reading experience.



After that, things become a bit of a blur for a year or so as far as comics go. I know that just after my ghostly experience with Casper and friends the family moved to England (my Dad had been sent to Ireland at the start of the war and was now coming back, looking for better paid work). We lived at a couple of short-stay places before settling into Baltimore Street in Newton Heath, Manchester. One of the memories I have from staying at one of the short-stay flats was reading a *Beano Annual*.

I can remember Biffo on the cover, about to crash a model plane into a basin of water (1956 edition). Funny the things that stick in a sick mind, eh.

So we moved house and settled into our new neighbourhood. Strangely enough (but not all that strange to someone like you, dear reader), I can still remember where all the paper shops were. Even then, when I was six or seven, I knew that some papershops were good ones and some bad, my sole criteria for measuring their value being based on the range of comics they stocked. This would have been the time when I became a regular reader of *Beano* and *Dandy*. Occasionally I may have picked up the recently launched *Beezer* or *Topper* but in the main I stuck with the smaller comics.

I was already becoming a discerning reader and instinctively knew that comic titles had their own feel and for that reason always saw *Dandy* as second best to *Beano* and *Topper* second best to *Beezer*. The *Beano* always felt more accessible. More working class, I suppose. Was there a bias to public schools and suchlike

in *Dandy*? (I know the *Beano* had Lord Snooty and his Pals but there might be an article there. I'll get reading.)

The *Beano* sucked me into my first science fiction serial – something about giant insects menacing England and a schoolboy with a peculiar habit and the ability to drive the giant bugs away whenever he appeared. His peculiarity was his keenness to make his own hair cream – perhaps a nod to the then Teddy Boy craze of using creams to create peaks and waves on their 'D.A.'. I learnt this fact about our hero in the first episode and every so often when there was a pause in the attack of a giant earwig against the school or ants overturning buses in the High Street, he would relax by brewing up another batch of his excellent hair cream.

It will come as no surprise to sophisticated minds to learn that it was the hair cream itself that drove away the bugs but to my youthful eye it was a startling revelation. I remember well reading the last episode, when the link is made and the army begins to use the formula for the hair cream to corner and defeat the insect hordes. I tried to explain to mum what had happened over the past 26 weeks or so and why this was such a momentous day. She listened but I doubt she had any idea what I was jabbering on about.

It was also for a science fiction strip that I fondly remember the *Beezer*. For 26 weeks or so the back page



**The suitably SF-looking market I went to three or four times a week during the '60s.**

carried the on-going story of 'The Metal Eaters', giant spherical sponges from space that absorbed any metal they came into contact with. They started off no larger than a bath sponge but each time they absorbed metal they grew larger. As the story continued, the Metal Eaters grew to monstrous proportions and humanity appeared doomed.

Whereas my giant insect story hinted at the world of colour through its use of a red spot colour, my sinister sponges were in full colour. And they looked great! Okay, they were 'only' spheres of pink sponges (a post-war innovation for bath-time and mainly a middle class one, I think) but they looked brilliant on the page with their pitted surface and emotionless presence. My main memory from the story is of the hero trapped high above the ground in a helicopter (another recent invention) with sponges eating away at its metal. Brrr.

By this time I was firmly into the world of comics and like a 'Paper Eater' devoured as many as I could. Like most kids, I bought a couple of comics a week and either swapped or was given comics by friends and neighbours. Comics, it seemed then, were everywhere. No matter where you went, a small pile of comics had accumulated. All those places you went to as a child; dentist, doctor, barber, etc. would have their reassuring stack of adventure and laughter just for the reading. If you were a kid in the '50s and '60s you couldn't avoid being exposed to comics.

Back to my story. At that time I was still a DC Thomson lad – and firmly attached to the funny papers rather than the new style older comics such as *Victor*, *Hornet* or *Hotspur*. And IPC/Fleetway comics such as *Lion* and *Tiger* were still a bit off in my future.

I was one of the few kids who didn't mind rainy playtimes at school, especially the longer dinner times. Games, toys and, more importantly, books and comics, would miraculously appear from cupboards and we would dip in and out of activities to our heart's content. Every classroom appeared to have stacks of annuals, summer specials and comics and I read every one I



**One of my local Cinemas - where I fell in love with the matinee shows and their mixture of cartoons, films and serials. Just like a comic.**

could get my hands on. As did everyone. All my friends read comics and knew the characters. It was just part of growing up.

But by the age of eight I was changing. For a start, I had decided to become an astronaut when I grew up and my love of 'space' was taking me over. (I simply assumed that by the time I was trained and ready for space travel Britain would have its own space programme. And besides, I had already started to build by own spaceship having been inspired by the adventures of 'Bleep and Booster' on *Blue Peter*.)

I watched 'space' on the telly, read about it from library books, played at it with friends (I was Steve Zodiac or Commander Dart whilst a friend of mine was always, inexplicably, Zoonie the Lazoon from *Fireball XL5*) and read about it in comics and annuals. You didn't have to look far before you found the Final Frontier in those days.

It was space, therefore, that brought me to TV Comic where I could get a weekly update on the continuing adventures of *Dr. Who*. By now I was crazy about the early Gerry Anderson shows and similar series such as Roberta Leigh's *Space Patrol* and TV Comic was a natural for me. Not only was it good to read but it looked different, too. It was printed on shiny paper, with lots of full colour and didn't fall apart so readily after multiple readings or swaps. Truly a comic for the Space Age.





The only drawback with *TV Comic* and related annuals such as *Supercar*, *Fireball XL5* and so on, was their cost. With most annuals being around 7/6 (38p), these other annuals came in at a whopping 9/6 (48p), 10/6 (53p) or even 11/6 (58p)! They may have sold well in richer parts of the country but they were not big sellers where I grew up. *Fireball XL5* annuals and *Supercar* adventure books rarely showed up in our swap piles.

When I was eight or nine, we moved again and I found myself living in Salford, just outside Manchester, where I would stay until my late teens. This is where my love of comics really took off and I crossed the line from reader to collector. Somewhere around the time we moved I received the greatest gift a comic nut can ever receive – a bike! Suddenly, the number of paper shops I could visit doubled, tripled – quadrupled! Instead of being held to the handful of papershops around 'our way', I could speed along roads and streets of the local area and easily visit twenty shops or so a week – plus market stalls and secondhand book shops for older, and cheaper, back issues. Heaven!

Saturday had now become my Comic Day – especially now that my parents were having the papers delivered and I was told I could add a comic or two to the bill. What began as a great luxury for me soon turned out to have hidden problems, however, as I couldn't keep to any one title for very long. I was (or so it seems) constantly asking my mum to change the comic on order, a task she obviously hated. I had started off quite well with the *Beano* (which I think was delivered on a

Thursday) and possibly *Victor* on a Saturday. Then I fell in love with *Valiant* (still one of my favourites) and had the *Victor* replaced. A short while later I was hooked on Gerry Anderson shows and couldn't resist *TV21* – so another swap was made. This time I think the *Beano* was replaced.

This meant that my Saturdays (see how I've cleverly arrived at the point of this article!) would begin with my mum dropping two comics on to my bed and telling me to wake up. Well, with the adventures of 'Kelly's Eye', 'Fireball XL5', 'Steel Claw' and a host of other SF-influenced heroes awaiting me, sleep was the last thing on my mind. (The *Valiant* has a lot to answer for in my childhood. I remember being told off – i.e. almost murdered – for painting one of my best gloves white and drawing rivets on it. Mum wasn't too impressed with the explanation that it was my very own Steel Claw.)

Back to the comics. I still have fond memories of being lay in bed, chin on my hands, leaning over the edge to read my comics on the rug. This was the perfect reading position for me and worked for most comics. I say most because Reading Position Number One remained a problem for the over-sized *TV21*. No matter how I tried to place the comic on the rug, it was impossible to read a whole double-page spread without having to stop at some point and move the comic! The whole matter was made worst with the strips that bled across both pages, the design of which forced me to change position every couple of panels. The things a comic reader has to put up with!

Like all adults, you think back to those days and recall how many comics and annuals you read a week and wonder where you found the time. They were great times for reading comics and I'm so pleased that I was born at just the right time to catch British comics at their zenith and so universal in distribution and availability.

It wasn't long after this that I came across American comics and – even more importantly – other comic collectors. Not readers. Collectors! But that, as they say, is another story... ■

**Me and my chums battling for the latest comics at the local comic shop!**

